REPORT

OF

The One-Man Committee On English IN Primary Education

West Bengal

21 September, 1998

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CHAPTER : ONE

Introduction

1.1 The present One-Man-committee was set up by the Government of West Bengal through the Notification No. 349—SE (Pry), dated, Calcutta, the 13th of April, 1990, the text of which is placed below :

Government of West Bengal
School Education Department
Primary Branch
Bikash Bhavan, Salt Lake, Calcutta-91.

No. 349—SE (Pry) Dated, Calcutta, the 13th April, 1998/

NOTIFICATION

The Governor is pleased to constitute a One-Man Committee to be chaired by Dr. Pabitra Sarkar, Vice-Chairman, West Bengal council of Higher Education, with the following terms of reference :

(a) to consider the issue of introduction of English as Second Language at any stage below class V in the Primary Schools under the direct control of, or receiving full financial assistance from, the Government of West Bengal, and to make recommendations, as may be considered appropriate ; and

(b) to suggest measures for restructuring of existing curriculum and syllabus of the primary-level education in the aforesaid schools.

2. The Committee will have its office at 147A, Rashbehari Avenue (Ground floor), Calcutta-700 029.

3. Necessary secretarial assistance will be provided to the Committee by the Director of School Education, West Bengal.

4. Fund, as may be necessary for running the affairs of the Committee, will be provided by the School Education Department, West Bengal.

5. The Committe will hold office for a term of 2 (two) months with effect from the date of its assumption of office and will submit its report and recommendations, as may be considered appropriate, to the Secretary, School Education Department, West Bengal, within the aforesaid period.

By order of the Governor

Sd/- **Nikhilesh Das**

Secy. to the Govt. of West Bengal.

1.2 The proposed Chairman of the Committee received the letter of the institution of the Committee in the afternoon of 20 April, 1998, and the Committee began its work the next day, i.e., 21 April, 1998. Having been assured that funding, support personnel and other requirements will be taken care of in due course by the Department in question, the Committee decided to pursue a work-plan which contained the following agenda :

1.2 (a) Visiting a few primary schools in each district of West Bengal, schools that are located both in urban and rural areas, and also those with sizeable minority and SC/ST student population. During these visits the Committee would seek the opinions of the teachers and guardians, (when the latter are available), and also would interact with the members of the district primary school councils and others interested in the matter.

1.2 (b) Issuing a questionnaire both in Bengali and English to which individuals and groups sensitive to the issue would be free to respond ;

1.2 (c) Meeting and receiving representations from :

1.2 (c) (i) Organisations of primary and secondary school teachers ;

1.2 (c) (ii) Education cells of political parties ;

1.2 (c) (iii) Organisations of school inspectors and education administrators who would like to be heard on the issue ;

1.2 (d) Interviewing and seeking responses from some of the acknowledged experts in the area, i.e., those involved in the teaching and research in English language, literature and linguistics (please see Annexure III for a list of the experts so consulted.) ;

1.2 (e) Studying and scanning letters sent to the Committee, those printed in different newspapers, and debates reported in the media of the region and the country ;

1.2 (f) Consulting books and papers that deal with second language acquisition/ learning for following the (international) course of the question ;

1.2 (g) Studying reports and recommendations of various commissions and committees instituted by the Government of India, and by that of West Bengal, related to the issue at hand ;

1.2 (h) Exploring international expert opinion through internet.

1.3 As the summer recess, panchayat elections and other such events intervened, the Committee realized that in would not be able to proceed according to schedule. Hence it requested Shri Kanti Biswas, Minister-in-Charge for School Education, for an extension of two months beyond 21 June, 1998, on which it was expected to submit its report and recommendations (please see its Letter No. OMC/144 of 19 June, 1998). Another, and a month's extension was also prayed for, somewhat belatedly, on 4 September, 1998, which also was responded to positively by the Government.

1.4 At the time of drafting the Report and Recommendations (early September, 1998), the Committe feels that it has had a fair amount of success in obtaining views from a large and representative section of people, both experts and ordinary citizens. Searching for international expert opinion through the internet ran into traffic problems, and nothing much beyond popular articles in mid-brow periodicals could be located. Hence books were used as the main source of international expert opinions. Most political parties have also made the views of their teachers' cells (both primary and secondary) available to the Committee (please see Annexure II for a list of the teachers' organisations met). National experts, teachers of English and linguistics, sociologists as well as political scientists also came forward to respond to the Committee's invitation. Teachers, guardians and school inspectors, hundreds of whom the Committee met in the course of its visit to the schools, have also expressed their views freely and frankly, often, surprisingly, deviating from the stand taken by, in the case teachers and inspectors, from their respective organisations. This was particularly felicitious for the Committee's work, as it was primarily interested in getting individual opinions, informed or otherwise, and not those that were organised or imposed from the above. Such opinions, formed on the basis of personal intellections, aspirations and beliefs, have as will be seen, obtained a validity of their own in the deliberations of the Committee.

1.5 The Report is organised in the following way :

1.5 (a) Chapter Two deals with the deeper historical background of the formation of the Committe, it attempts a brief excursus in the vicissitudes of English as a second language in the syllabus in West Bengal since Independence.

1.5 (b) Chapter Three provides a further retrospection in the same area, as it looks into the recommendations of various commissions and committees appointed by the Government of India and, if available, by other administrative authorities in the country.

1.5 (c) Chapter Four covers the status of English in primary education in the countries of the world as well as in various states/UTs of the nation.

1.5 (d) Chapter Five discusses the neuropsychological and pedagogical issues involved in teaching a second language.

1.5 (e) Chapter Six presents an analysis of the opinions received.

1.5 (f) Chapter Seven contains the Recommendations of the committee, both within the terms of reference, as also some outside them.

1.6 The following annexures are conjoined at the end of the Report :

1.6 (i) Annexure I : The list of schools visited.

1.6 (ii) Annexure II : Organisations met.

1.6 (iii) Annexure III : Experts who met or interacted with the committee, with their designation and address.

1.6 (iv) Annexure IV : Excerpts from the opinions of scholars.

1.6 (v) Annexure V : The Questionnaires circulated.

1.6 (vi) Annexure VI : Selective Bibliography.

1.7 The Committee expresses its deep gratitude to Professor Satyasadhan Chakravarty, Minister-in-Charge for Higher Education, West Bengal, for allowing the Committee to use the office of the West Bengal State Council of Higher Education as its office. It thanks Mr. Adrian Thomas, Director, British Council Division, Calcutta, for providing internet support and Shri Chinmoy Chatterjee for helping with the internet surfing. The English Teaching Institute and the Institute of Education for Women, Hastings House, Calcutta have been kind enough to permit the Committee liberal access to their rich libraries. Similar help was received from SCERT, West Bengal and David Hare Training College, Calcutta. The Committee is also appreciative of the help and cooperation received from the experts, teachers, guardians, school inspectors, chairpersons and members of the district primary school councils. The chairpersons of the DPSCs, and the DI's and SI's of primary and secondary schools made every effort to make the

committee's visits to the districts comfortable, and, at the same time, fruitful. When the Committee met the members of the DPSCs and other invitees in the DPSC offices, there was free exchange of ideas, reflecting a democracy that was working behind the formation of such councils. Our colleagues at the West Bengal State Higher Education Council have helped us in more ways than we could demand of them, without ever caring to think whether they were officially assigned to do a job or not. And we are also thankful to our colleagues in the Committee itself, who provided clerical and other support. We must also mention the help we received from Mr. Barry Cowan, an American scholar of psycholinguistics from the University of Howaii. Prof. Paromesh Acharya rendered some last-minute help with reference materials. The committee finally thanks the thousands of young students in the primary schools it visited, who, just by their lively presence in the vicinity, made the Committee's work much lighter, as the very sight of them sitting in packed schoolrooms, having their first lessons in the 3R's, is an energizing, even inspiring experience, notwithstanding the fact that a huge majority of them do not have even a fraction of the required environmental support for learning still after the fiftieth year of our Independence.

1.8 The Committee asks for the indulgence of the readers and users of the Report, as the Report has, more or less, taken the shape of an academic paper, in some parts of the body of the text at least, going, thereby, beyond the familiar framework of an official report. The reason for this is that the Committee has felt rather strongly about the campaign of disinformation that has been being carried out by a few persons and agencies. It, therefore, has felt that the people had certainly a right to have all the information, to the extent that can be provided, before them, and to have an opportunity of looking into all the aspects of the debate. An inordinate amount of folklore and mythology has been created by biased individuals who are either ill-informed, yet seeking to pass their unsound information as profundity of knowledge, or narrow partisans who peddle half-truths with a sprinkling of bombastic mumbo-jumbo, in order to intimidate and befuddle the unsuspecting citizen. The Committee humbly claims that it has sought to place all the relevant information and arguments with an academic honesty (that is why explicit references have been provided), so that everyone can judge for oneself what led the Committee to arrive at the decisions it ultimately did. On one hand it explored the academic and sociological dimensions of the dabate, and on the other, the newly generated social aspirations. Then, weighing carefully their respective thrusts, formulated its recommendations accordingly. The committee also apologises if its comments on certain arguments presented by the bazaar authorities are found harsh. Harshness, it feels, is but an automatic response to the personal attacks and vilifications carried on by these self-styled authorities in their designs to influence the considerations of the Committee.

1.9 Incidentally, the Committee has noted that there is a large amount of confusion about the nomenclature 'second language'. It, therefore, sought to distinguish between the 'second language' used in the general literature dealing with bilingualism in the West, which is "typically acquired in a social environment in which it is ***actually spoken***" (emphasis ours, see Klein, 1986 : 19), and the second school language (English in this case), which is not spoken in India over by far the largest domain of the Indian environment, and where most children do not have the opportunity of learning it through spoken interchange. English, therefore, is a 'foreign language' in India, both structurally as well as environmentally, as it is "a language acquired in a milieu where it is normally not in use (i.e., usually through instruction), and which, when acquired, is not used by the learner in routine situations" (Klein, as above). English in India is taught as first, second and third ***school language*** at various levels of educational curricula. For our purposes, then, English is only a curricular second language, or an additional school language, to be taught at the primary level.

Dr Pabitra Sarkar
Chairman

CHAPTER : TWO

English at the Primary Level in Colonial India

2.1 The decision about when, how and how much English should be taught in India at the primary stage underwent many a shift since English had been first introduced as a teaching subject, and then as an instructional medium, after the acceptance of the Minute of Macauley on 2 February, 1835, which were concurred to by Lord William Bentinck on 7 March of the same year. Macauley remarked in his Minute... "It seems to be admitted on all sides, that the intellectual improvement of those pursuing higher studies can at present be affected by means of some language not vernacular amongst them" (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 13), and then recommended that this language had to be English. Macauley also envisaged that people having higher education in English would "form a class who may be interpreters between" the British rulers and the millions they governed, and this English-educated class would, as he thought, be "a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect." (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 18).

2.2 Macauley's recommendations, as we can see, viewed English as a vehicle for pursuing higher studies, and he seems to accommodate the Indian vernaculars for doing the lesser job of "conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population" (as above), after, of course, their eventual refinement and enrichment by the people receiving higher education through English. It should therefore look as though, it was none other than Mr. Macauley, who, now glorified by a few anglophile Indians who know no better[1], was the first architect of a class-cleavage in terms of educational opportunities. His plan was to expose young Indians to a 'superior' and more modern civilization, i.e., that of England and the West. The educational policy of the colonial and imperial India had largely followed Macauley's directions. Higher education had been offered through the medium of English, no doubt for some reasons deemed valid at that time, and school level education had also been conducted in English for less valid reasons, for the major part of the colonial domination.

2.3 Later scholars, Krishnaswamy and Sriraman (1994 : 46) for example, have of course noted that most of the members of Macauley's 'dream class', i.e., the ***babus*** or ***bhadralogs***, cared very little about interpreting the high western knowledge to their vernacular-condemned countrymen, as they went on seeking their own personal ends. One has only to read Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's article "Lokashiksha" '('Mass

Education') In his periodical *Bangadarshan* (Chatterjee, 1877/1939 : 367) which contains these sad words—"I tell you the broad reason why, in spite of so much English education, avenues of educating the people are dwindling instead of increasing—there is no bond of sympathy between the educated and the uneducated. The educated does not know the mind of the uneducated. The educated does not look at the (face of the) uneducated. Let Rama be damned to his ploughpushing, I want my fowl-curry well-seasoned. Phatikchand of Nadia does not lose his sleep on how Rama spends his day, what he thinks, or what makes him happy. Phatikchand of Nadia is concerned solely with what the one-eyed Faucette Sahib of England, or Sir Osley Eden of this country would say about his speech. Let Rama go to hell, it does not matter to him. Rama and his clan, a clan that numbers sixty five millions nine thousand nine hundred among the sixty-six millions of Phatik's countrymen, do not understand what Phatikchand thinks. What use can his fame possibly have? What use can his fluency in English possibly have? The sky is being sundered by the wailing of the sixty-six million—the highly educated does not care for the fact that people of Bengal remain illiterate ; there is no education in Bengal". On the other side of the picture, this also has to be acknowledged that a few of Bankimchandra Chatterjee's ilk contributed richly to develop Indian vernaculars, so that they can be modernized and standardized to the fullest extent, in order that they can be made fit vehicles, not only of aesthetic experience through creative literature, but also of metropolitan and universal knowledge. A prose style was developed which could be used in educational texts. But the general apathy of the self-seeking "educated" class continued unabetted, as will be seen from the slow progress of literacy in pre-Independence India. Kachru (1994 : 507) is closer to the truth when he sees Macauley's Minute as "a classic example of using language as a vehicle for destabilizing a subjugate culture with the aim of creating a subculture". The major question, however, was : in which way this subculture would relate itself to the rest of the culture of the country. That this relationship had a broadly negative feature should be evident from the comments of Bankimchandra, as those of Rabindranath Tagore, a little later.

2.4 The disappointment which Bankimchandra Chatterjee displays in the above article had been anticipated by some Englishmen themselves, a fact that is well documented in history. We may quote a viceroy (1869-72), Lord Mayo's letter to one of his friends : "I dislike this filtration theory. In Bengal we are educating in English a few hundred Babus at great expense to the State. Many of them are well able to pay for themselves, and have no other object in learning than to qualify for Government employ. In the meanwhile we have done nothing towards extending knowledge to the millions. The Babus will never do it. The more education you give them, the more they will keep to themselves, and make their increased knowledge a means of tyranny. If

you wait till the bad English, which the 400 Babus learn in Calcutta, filters down into the 40,000,000 of Bengal, you will be ultimately a Silurian rock instead of a retired Judge. Let the Babus learn English by any means. But let us also to do something towards teaching the three R's to "Rural Bengal". (quoted in Marriot, 1932 : 203).

2.4 Our objective here is not to follow the shifts that have taken place in the study of English in India at all levels, as English at the primary stage is our major concern. For our purposes, the next most important Government document which presents itself to our view is what is called the Wood's Despatch of 1854, which, for the first time in the history of British rule in India, recommended Governmental participation in the educational planning of the country by suggesting that a grants-in-aid system of school education be initiated by the Government. The following comments from the Despatch is closer to our immediate interest—"We have declared that our object is to extend European knowledge throughout all classes of the people. We have shown that this object must be affected by means of the English language in the higher branches of the institution, and by that of the vernacular languages of India to the great mass of people". (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 28).

2.5 Even as Wood's Despatch was prudent enough to prescribe "vernaculars for the masses", English was introduced as a school subject, as an additional language, at the primary level. The Despatch commented further that "While the English language continues to be made use as by far the most perfect *medium* for the education of those persons who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of it to receive general instruction *through* it, the vernacular languages must be employed to teach the far larger classes who are ignorant or imperfectly acquainted with English" (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 24). However, even though a second language, English, soon assumed a prestige and power that far surpassed those of the pupil's first language. Acharya (1998 : 28) quotes Bandyopadhyay (1948 : 62-63) to note that "Bengali was only a minor subject in the school founded by Vidyasagar in his native village Birsingha. English and Sanskrit were given the pride of place in the curriculum of that school". Although Sen (1933 : 297-300) is not able to locate English in his survey of the "Curriculum of Studies" pursued in Assam, Bombay, Bengal, the Punjab, and the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, and he mentions that it was a subject in the Primary Final Examination of the Maktab system alone (pp. 299-300), he goes on to point out that..."for year since 1835, when Macauley penned his famous Minute, the teaching of vernaculars were relegated to a very low place. From 1935 to 1854 the vernacular teaching was completely lost sight of in secondary schools, and even was occasionally banished from primary schools". And, with the establishment of the first three Indian universities, i.e., those of Calcutta, Bombay and Madras in 1857, "English became the sole medium of instruction not only

in the colleges, but also in secondary schools. *Even in the higher forms of elementary schools, English began to be taught* (emphasis ours, pp. 301-2). Kachru (1994 : 507) informs that "by 1882 over 60 per cent of primary schools were imparting education through the English medium". The University Commission of 1882 (the so-called Hunter Commission) made adverse remarks about the absurdity of conducting a mass education campaign through a foreign medium. That is possibly why the University Commission of 1902 looked with disfavour at the continuous use of English as a medium and, surprisingly anticipating the policy of educational administration in the post-Independence India, suggested that, "The line of division between the use of the vernacular and English as a medium of instruction, broadly speaking, be drawn at a minimum age of thirteen" (Sen, 1933 : 302). The same document (Resolution on the Indian Educational Policy, 1904) noted that "there is much evidence to the effect that scholars who have been through a complete vernacular course are exceptionally efficient mentally" (Ibid : 303). A similar observation is available in Mitra (1967 : 446) who quotes a source who found that among the successful candidates aspiring to enter the Hindu School, then the best school in Calcutta, "a steady majority of successful competitors came from the vernacular and not from the English Middle School." It should be remembered in this context, that, by a quirk of history, efforts to run a few all-vernacular schools with no English in any form, the so-called Hardinge Schools, met with total failure between 1844-54, partly because the Government was less than half-hearted in its support to them, and partly also because people in the urban areas in which these schools were set up were not very keen to keep English out of the school curriculum (Basak, 1974 : 385-411).

2.6 Incidentally, on English as an additional school language at the primary stage, Sen offers his own judgement which we quote..."No English need...be taught in primary schools to pupils below ten years of age. If we consider eleven years as the upper limit of the primary school age, only in the two highest classes some English may be taught as an optional subject." In this he apparently follows the instances of persons like Sir Gooroodas Banerjee and Rabindranath Tagore, whose pronouncements are too familiar to be quoted extensively here. The Calcutta University Commission of 1917-19 also wished that English should be used in high schools only (Sen, 304). Underlying this wish was the assumption that a pupil was supposed to matriculate at the age of 15, so he, the Commission thought, could safely begin learning English at the age of 10. Lord Curzon, India's viceroy from 1899 to 1905, at whose instance the 1903 Calcutta University Commission was instituted, commented on the current instructional media in this manner : "The vernaculars are the living languages of this great continent. English is the vehicle of learning and advancement to the small minority ; but for the vast bulk

it is a foreign tongue which they do not speak and rarely hear. If the vernaculers contained no literary models, no classics, I might not be so willing to recommend them. But we all know that in them are enshrined famous treasures of literature and art ; while even the secrets of modern knowledge are capable of being communicated thereby in an idiom and in phrases which will be understood by millions of people to whom our English terms and ideas will never be anything but an untelligible jargon". (Marriot, 1932 : 207-8).

2.7 These counsels, whatever their merits, did not affect any change in the continued practice of studying English at the primary level. English was then the Raj-bhasha ('the King's language'), as it was popularly called, and it continued to be the medium of instruction at the secondary level and beyond, till Bombay University did away with its medium requirement in 1929, to be followed by the University of Calcutta in 1940.

2.8 The Committee is well aware of the fact that English as a medium is not at issue here. However, its status as a medium can hardly be separated from its status as a second or third language subject, since its use as a medium of instruction in the grants-in-aid schools till 1939, and widespread use in the same capacity in private schools till now, reflect its dominance in the instructional system of the country, as well as in the psyche of the people seeking, or involved in, education. This dominance is no doubt due to its various roles, both real and perceived, as the 'language of better opportunity', 'language of wider communication', 'language of the elite', 'language of modernisation' etc. In spite of this acrolectal position of English in our education (or is it because of it?), the percentage of literate citizens of India remained appallingly low till Independence, as will be seen from the following figures :

1901	5.35
1911	5.95
1921	7.16
1931	9.50
1941	16.10
1951	16.67
1961	24.02
1971	29.45
1981	43.67
1991	52.21

It will also be observed that the *rate* of increase in literacy between 1901 and 1951 is, once again, very low, but it changed considerably for the better after that. And the Language Commission lets us have this information that in 1951, only about 38000,00 Indians, a little above 1% of the total population of the country, claimed to know some English. This was the outcome of about a hundred years of English in India, both as a subject and as a medium (p. 26 of the Bengali version of the Report which we used)! And to ask how many of these English-educated persons were 'educated' in the real sense of the term will of course be redundant. We quote from an article by an eminent teacher of English of the country, who has this to say,..."The requirement of such an extensive role of English as the medium has not really promoted scholarship ; it has inhibited it. Such a situation is bound to promote rote learning, and anxiety complex, and a sense of insecurity in one's scholarship. The scholarly luminaries on the Indian scene are simply exceptions who have succeeded in spite of the system, not because of it. For every scholar of this kind, there are at least a thousand who could have done better it is were not such an extensive role of English as a medium" (Verma, M. K. 1994 : 121).

2.9 The use of English as a medium lends the language, already powerful and heir to the Raj glory, a high position as an object of desire, which, in its turn, takes away some desirability from the vernacular, either as a medium, or even as a subject. The vernacular is in most cases the home language of the pupil, or the most accessible regional language, and as an object of study in such an 'open-sky' environment, it receives less and less priority, because of its restricted functionality. It is therefore disparagingly evaluated by the student of the English medium schools and his/her parents, who consider it to be a dispensable appendage to the syllabus. Folklores abound on guardians taking pride in their wards' lack of skill or interest in the vernacular. To them English represents the vehicle of better opportunities and higher prestige. To such an attitude a new component has been added recently, that of the access to international culture through the electronic media. The student's own language cannot provide him/her with all of these and it therefore suffers in comparison with English.

2.10 When one takes a look at the policy decisions about language instruction arrived at by various commissions and committee instituted by the Federal Government, one is surprised by the absence of any comment on the efficay or otherwise of an other tongue as a medium. None of the commissions and committees is found to take a policy stand on English-medium education at the primary or secondary stage, in schools outside the government umbrella. On one hand there is a profusion of lip-service proclaiming the effectiveness of the mother tongue education, while, on the other, the question whether English medium education is equally or more effective, has never been

squarely faced by them. The silence of the policy-makers in this area is often chilling, and the hypocrisy unbearable.

2.11 That Nagaland has to have English from class 1, occassionally even as an instructional medium, is perfectly understandable because of the peculiar linguistic situation that prevails there, where some thirteen independent Naga languages, none standardized to the desirable extent yet, exist side by side, and none commanding, in addition, a crucial majority or power status for considering its use as a medium for all the groups. What is not understandable is why it has to be English and not some contiguous Indian language. Still, similar situations also prevail in Kenya, Zambia and other East African countries, where linguistic diversity and minority as well as low-power status of the languages come in the way of their being used as the general or national medium of instruction (see Gachukia, 1970, McAdam, 1970 in Goreman, 1970). But where there is a fully viable mother tongue/regional language available to be used as a medium, it is not easily appreciated why a foreign language should be used as such. The lack of a clear-cut policy on the instructional ***medium*** has led to the growth of parallel systems of linguistic instruction, and ultimately to the growth of 'two cultures' (of course in a different sense from that of Edgar Snow) and two classes which the national planners thought it best to ignore and treated with profound silence. The slogans of 'equity', 'Equal access and opportunity of education' etc. sound quite hollow in the context of such duplicity of approach. As long as another language will continue to enjoy a dominating role in our education system, a language that is more powerful and prestigeous, and therefore perceived to be superior to the vernacular of the student, all the pious pronouncements of the commissions and committees on vernacular education in schools will not presage a better or higher status for it. This 'dutch treat' approach of allowing private educational institutions to have a free option as to the medium of instruction has, sooner or later, to be located in the broader purview of a national policy on it.

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1. In a recent newspaper article, an Indian writer of English, Manohar Mulgaokar has praised Macauley for 'gifting' India with 'a bilingual society' (*The Statesman*, Calcutta, 13 July, 1998). It is his supreme ignorance about bilingualism and, at the same time, his blind Anglocentricism, that make him think that no society is bilingual unless it uses English as the 'other' language. That a society can be equally bilingual with Persian, or Sanskrit and any other language with which it comes into contact, is a possibility of which, one presumes, Mr. Mulgaokar does not approve.

CHAPTER : THREE

National Policy on Second Language Instruction after Independence

3.1 In this Chapter we take a retrospective look at the recommendations of the commissions and committees, instituted by the Government of India since Independence, i.e., recommendations that have some relevance for issue that confronts the Committee. While going through these reports, one is struck by the uniformity of their outlook and a desire for continuity with the earlier stands taken. These recommendations, one can assume, reflect the policy of the federal administration regarding language instruction in schools, at least in those under its control. The state committees, in their turn, follow the general guidelines provided by the national committees, and, unless they have to act under pressing local compulsions, adopt the measures suggested by the national ones.

3.2 We begin with the Committee on Secondary Education in India of 1948 (the so-called Tara Chand Committee) which recommends that, "The teaching of the Federal language should be started at the end of the Junior Basic stage and should be compulsory throughout the Pre-Secondary stage, but may be optional thereafter", and "English may be an optional subject at the Senior Basic stage and should be compulsory throughout the Pre-Secondary and Secondary stages, so long as it remains the medium of instruction in the universities". (Patra, 1987 : 3). We may mention that the Committee, in the same Report, locates Senior Basic between classes VI and VII.

3.3 The first syllabus for the Primary (Junior Basic) schools published by the Directorate of Education, West Bengal in 1950, was structured on the recommendations of a Sub-Committee headed by Dr. S. N. Laha and instituted by the State Government. It contains no agendum of teaching a second language till class V. It prescribes the use of only one language textbook for each class from class II to V, waiving, therefore, the requirement of a printed text for class I (W. B. Directorate of Education, 1950 : 4). The first School Education Committee (President Rai Harendra Nath Chaudhuri) of 1948 decided that "English should not be taught in the primary classes (I–V)" (Report, 1954 : 7).

3.4 The Secondary Education Commission (Chaired by Dr. A Lakshmanswami Mudaliar) of 1952-53 instructs : "During the middle school stage, every child should be

taught at least two languages. English and Hindi should be introduced at the end of the Junior Basic stage, subject to the principle that no two languages should be introduced in the same year" (Government of India Ministry of Education 1953 : 73).

3.5 The Commission that dealt only with the language issue, i.e., of Official Language Commission of 1955, (the so-called B. G. Kher Commission), made explicit statements on how first and second languages are to be placed in the early learning years of the Indian child. It says, "As for the regional language, it is stated that the learners will learn only this at the primary stage. It will be the medium of instruction at the secondary stage". (Translated from the Bengali text of the Report of 1956 available with the Committee : "আঞ্চলিক ভাষা সম্বন্ধে বক্তব্য এই যে, শিক্ষার্থীরা প্রাথমিক স্তরে একান্তভাবে এই ভাষা শিক্ষা করিবে ; মাধ্যমিক স্তরে বরাবর ইহাই হইবে শিক্ষার মাধ্যম।") The Commission further observed that English had a very restricted role in the primary education of the country ("ভাষা হিসাবে ইংরেজী শিক্ষার ব্যাপারে দেখা যাইবে যে, প্রাথমিক স্তরে ভাষা হিসাবে ইংরেজীর পাঠ বিশেষ স্থান পায় নাই।" p. 57), and therefore it specifically recommended that teaching of English should began five years before the student gets his/her school leaving certificate. That is, he/she should have five years of English before leaving the secondary school. (p. 60). It further observed that for the children that would receive free and compulsory education, learning English would be a wastage. Nothing will be gained by instructing them in English for this short span of time. ("যে সব শিশু নিখরচা ও বাধ্যতামূলক প্রাথমিক শিক্ষা লাভ করিবে তাহার ইংরেজী ভাষা শিক্ষা অপচয় হইবে মাত্র। এই অল্প সময়ে ইংরেজীর মত সম্পূর্ণ একটি বিদেশী ভাষার শিক্ষাদানে কোন উদ্দেশ্য সিদ্ধ হইবে না।" p. 50).

3.6 The UGC Review Committee for English in Indian Universities (Chaired by Prof. G. C. Banerjee), 1960, recommended that "English should be studied in schools for at least six years" (Patra, 1987 : 79), which obviously implies that there would be no English at the primary level. The constitution of this Committee, it should be remembered, immediately followed that of the UGC English Review Committee formed in 1955 (Chaired by H. N. Kunzru) which discussed the future status of English in higher education.

3.7 The Study Group for English, Ministry of Education, government of India, 1964 made recommendations which were incorporated in the Comments in Section 8.47 of the Report of the Indian Education Commission, 1964-66 (see next).

3.8 The Indian Education Commission, 1964-66 (the so-called Kothari Commission) contains perhaps the most elaborate statements on the role of English in the early years of schooling of the Indian child—

"We have recommended that its teaching may begin in class V, but we realize that for many pupils, particularly in the rural areas, the study will not commence before class VII" (p. 342).

The Commission then refers to the view of the Study Group of English (mentioned above) in its Section 8.47 and comments, "The Group has also expressed the view that the policy recently adopted by several states (*our* note : West Bengal was one of them) is educationally unsound. We agree with this view. We believe that an adequate command of the mother tongue should be acquired before the learning of a foreign language like English is begun. Moreover, the effective teaching of English in the lower primary classes where millions of pupils are enrolled, requires a very large number of trained teachers who are not available. Even if they were, the programme will be a heavy drain on the funds allotted for education. In our opinion, this is a colossal task, the improper pursuit of which will lower rather than upgrade the standards of English at the school stage. We, therefore, recommend that the study of English as a first language, except on an experimental basis in certain schools, should not begin before class V' (p. 343).

3.9 The Committee of the Members of the Parliament on National Policy of Education (Chairman : Dr. Triguna Sen), 1969, recommended, "Only one language, *viz* the medium of education, should ordinarily be studied in the first sub-stage of school education, covering four or five years. A second language should be introduced, on a compulsory basis, ordinarily at the beginning of the next sub-stage" (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 659).

3.10 In 1975, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) circulated a Framework of the Curriculum for the Ten-Year School, as the recommendations of the Curriculum Committee installed for the purpose in 1973 (Chairman, Prof. Rais Ahmed). It, as is seen in the class curriculum, suggests no second language till class V (please see its Section on 'Area of School Work", p. 28), and it adds a second language in the curriculum for class VI (p. 30), which it proposed to continue till class X.

3.11 The Review Committee on the Curriculum for the Ten Year School of 1977 (Chairman : Ishwarbhai J. Patel) is found to observe, "we feel that in determining the pattern of languages to be taught, the recommendations of the Kothari Commission should be given due consideration and that these recommendations should be used as guidelines in formulating and reformulating any policies in the teaching of languages" (Biswas and Agarwal, 1986 : 452).

3.12 The NCERT proposed another Framework in 1985 for National Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education. This framework recommends "One language— the mother tongue or the regional language" for the lower primary stage (2.2.2 (b) and "three languages" for the upper primary stage (2.2.2 (c) (p. 10).

3.13 The revised edition of 1988 of the Framework of National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education makes these remarks on the issue : "The study of only one language—the mother tongue/regional language—is envisaged at the primary stage. However, if resources are available, the study of the second language may be introduced in a suitable grade/class at the primary stage. In case of states/UTs where only the first language is studied at the primary stage, the study of the second language should be introduced in the first year of the upper primary stage' (i.e. in class VI—*our* note) Section. 26.1).

3.14 The Draft Programme of Action (National Policy of Education, 1986), 1992, prescribes nothing about the role of English as a second language, although it, in its Section 18 (Development of Languages, p. 178-86) suggests that children should be taught in their mother tongue for the first five years of their schooling, to abide by the directive of the Article 350-A of the Indian Constitution. It has, however, acknowledged that the emphasis in the National Policy is on the adoption of Modern Indian Languages (MIL) as the media of instruction at the University stage. (p. 178 of the typed copy circulated by the Ministry of Human Resource Development). This emphasis implies a further restriction of the role of English in India.

3.15 All the above will clearly show the direction in which the minds of the linguistic planners of the country moved in formulating recommendations for a second language at the primary level. It is, in this context, partinent to add that out of 63,31,308 primary sections and schools in the country, only about 90,420 school, that is 14.32% of the total, use English as a second language at the primary stage (Fifth All India Educational Survey, NCERT, 1992 : 218).

3.16 It will also be easily noticed that the present demand for English as an additional language at the primary level in West Bengal in not consonant with the national policy so long pursued since Independence. The national commissions and committees have been quite consistent over the decades in their decision-making in relation to the subject and remained firm in their conviction that only one language in the early years of schooling was the best for the learning child. It was not just a pedagogical decision, but, we presume, was also a social one. It was taken, along with other 'supply-side interventions', to ensure maximum enrolment as well as retention of the enrolled students in schools. That retention was a primary concern for the national planners of early school education has once more been emphasized in the 1986 National Policy on Education which affirms "The new thrust in elementary education will emphasize three aspects : (i) Universal access and enrolment, (ii) universal retention of children up to 14 years of age ; and (iii) a substantial improvement in the quality of education to achieve essential levels of learning." (NPE, 1986, with Modifications undertaken in 1992 : 18).

CHAPTER : FOUR

English in Education : India and the world

4.1 The Committee intends, in this Chapter, to have a bird's eye view over the educational role of English at the primary level, in this country, as well as in other countries of the world. This, the Committee hopes, will offer a broad perspective to the debate within which the Committee has to do its assignment. We have to acknowledge that the data we present here, specifically those related to the international arena, are somewhat dated, as no detailed information was available which could be called recent. The Indian data are of course current.

4.2 While English is used as a medium in the so-called English-Medium nursery/convent/kindergarten schools in urban or semi-urban areas, as also in the elitist 'public schools' in various hill stations and other such resorts, the grants-in-aid schools, as well as those under the direct control of the state governments, mostly pursue instruction in mother tongue or the regional language—which is the local language of wider communication. Debates occasionally accompany any attempt of changing the role of English prevalent in these institutions. For example, the Tamil Nadu minister for Tamil Official Language and Tamil Culture, Shri Thamizhkudimagan became a centre of controversy when he asserted that "True to the election manifesto of the DMK", he was going "to give preference (*munnuri mal*) in employment to those who have their complete education in the Tamil medium" (Chitra, 1996 : Expressweek 1). In many other states of the country, complete vernacularisation of primary education has met with little objection. Whatever protests were there, they cannot be compared with what West Bengal has witnessed in recent times. In no other state, the primary language question has been turbulent enough to become national, or even international news.

4.3 The use of English as an additional, or often as a third additional language in the government and grants-in-aid schools in various Indian states/UT's is shown in the following list : (Roman numerals indicate class ; '—' means no English at that stage).

Andhra III (as L3, Hindi being L2), Arunachal III, Assam IV, Bihar (–), Gujarat (–), Haryana (–), Jammu and Kashmir (–), Kerala III, Madhya Pradesh (–), Maharashtra (–), Karnataka (–), Nagaland I (L2), Punjab (–),

Rajasthan (–), Tamil Nadu III, Uttar Pradesh (–), West Bengal V, Chandigarh (–), Dadra, Nagar Haveli (–), Goa, Daman, and Diu IV, Himachal Pradesh IV, Lakshadives III, Meghalaya III, Pondicherry (–), Tripura III.

4.4 On the other hand, the world situation with respect to English at the primary level, taught as an additional language, is, according to the information we have, as follows : (percentage-wise)

4.4 (i) **Africa** :

Botswana 100.0 (1971) Cameroon 56.8 (1971), Ethiopia 14.0 (1971), Gambia 100.0 (1971), Ghana 100.00 (1971), Kenya 100.0 (1971), Lesotho 100.0 (1971), Liberia 100.0 (1970), Malawi 100.0 (1970), Mauritania 15.9 (1971), Mauritius 100.0 (1971), Nigeria 100.0 (1971), South African Republic 100.0 (1970),

Rhodesia 100.0 (1968), Sierra Leone 100.0 (1971), Somalia 33.3 (1971), Swaziland 100.0 (1972), Tanzania 100.0 (1971), Uganda 100.0 (1972), Zambia 100.0 (1972).

The countries of Africa which do not show any English at the primary education level are :

Algeria, Angola, Central African Republic, Egypt, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Upper Volta, Zaire.

4.4 (ii) **Asia**

Bangladesh 45.5 (1969), Hong Kong 80.5 (1971), India 10.0 (1971), Iraq 24.7 (1971), Israel 56.0 (1971), Jordan 25.0 (1971), Lebanon 33.3 (1970), Malayasia, 100.0 (1971), Nepal 43.8 (1969), Philippines 100.0 (1972), Singapore 100.0 (1971), Sri Lanka 41.3 (1969), Thailand 25.0 (1970).

Countries in Asia with no English at the primary stage.

Afganistan, Myanmar (Burma), Cyprus, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Vietnam. (No data on China and Taiwan were available with our source).

4.4 (iii) **Europe**

Austria 27.4 Czechoslovakia 25.8, Denmark 34.5, Finland 42.1, West Germany 15.4, Luxemburg 70.0, Malta 100.0, Norway 25.9, Romania 10.8, Spain 0.4, Sweden 59.7, Switzerland 24.2, Soviet Russia 12.5 (All information is that of 1971).

European countries with no English at the primary level :

Belgium, Bulgaria, France, East Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Jugoslavia.

4.4 (iv) **South America**

Columbia 9.4 (1969), Cuba 2.5 (1971), Hondurus 2.6 (1970), Mexico 3.4 (1970), Puerto Rico 100.0 (1971).

Countries in South America which do not have any English at the primary level :

Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Equador, EI Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela.

4.4 (v) At the time this information was collected, total number of students taking English (both as a subject and as a medium) at the level in question, was counted as follows :

	Total in English class	English as Subject		English as Medium	
Africa	15,438,251	7,812,875	(50%)	7,625,376	(49%)
Asia	26,077,553	15,698,585	(71%)	6,378,968	(28.9%)
Europe	3,077,447	3,077,447	(100%)	—	(–)
S. America	1,110,242	1,110,242	(100%)	—	(–)
Soviet Russia	5,00,000	5,000,000	(100.0%)	—	(–)

(Source : Fishman, J., et al., 1977 : 18–24)

4.5 The broad conclusions of Fishman and Conrad, reached on the basis of the above data, are as follows :

4.5 (i) English was an additional official language in those countries where, at one time or other, there had been, or still was, either political or economic dominance of an English-speaking people.

4.5 (ii) Countries outside this history of dominance seldom used English as a medium of instruction. Even where the language was being used, there were indications that a national language (Malay in Malaysia, Swahili in Tanzania and Amheric in Ethiopia for example) would eventually restrict the role of English in future.

4.5 (iii) Poor countries show considerable preference for English in higher education.

4.5 (iv) About 97% of English newspapers are published in non-English speaking countries which either had been or still were colonies of English-speaking peoples.

4.6 Admittedly, due to economic globalisation and the expanding operations of the transnational corporations, as with the faster speed of technology transfer, the role of 'business English' has received a boost, and that is certain to be reflected in the educational use of the language in various countries, both in the so-called 'outer' and 'expanding' circles (Kachru, 1985). But people who are studying this phenomenon, even Englishmen among them, conclude that there is no ground to be in a triumphalist mood. As Graddol notes, ..."the future for English will be a complex and a plural one. The language will grow in usage and variety, yet simultaneously diminish in relative global importance. We may find that the hegemony of English replaced by an oligarchy of languages, including Spanish and Chinese. To put it in economic terms, the size of the global market for the English language may increase in absolute terms, but its market share will probably fall." (Graddol, 1998 : 3).

4.7 The whole exercise in this Chapter has been done with the intention of pointing at the fact that English certainly has a use in the current economic scenario of the world (which needs no certification from a committee like this), but the question whether it has to be taught from the very first year in which an Indian child enters school, invites other considerations which will be considered later.

CHAPTER : FIVE

'The Earlier, the Better' : A Noisy Space

5.1 Although the Committee has always been alert to the fact that a language was not just an object or a cultural artefact, it was a powerful tool besides and therefore, is enmeshed in the manifold aspects of our social thought and actions related to the identity, dominance, submission or revolt of a social group, and the Committee's final decision must therefore take into account these deep yet volatile social factors, it had nevertheless planned to look into the theoretical side of the question, which can be formulated in the form of these questions : is there any special (neurophysiological) reasons that children should begin learning a second language early? Are grown-up children and adults less endowed by nature in their capacity to learn a second language well? Many of the local crusaders for English crying themselves hoarse on the issue pose these questions in a devious manner, and provide answers which serve them best, with suppressed information, half-truths and some ill-digested jargons to scare away a questioning audience.

5.2 That children of a certain age (between, say, 1 and 11 years) has an extraordinary faculty of picking up languages, and that they can learn to speak fluently more than one language during this age is a universally attested phenomenon. It happens with children of normal physical and mental growth, speaking any human language anywhere. But they can do it only when they are exposed to a language for a more or less extended span of time, that is, when they listen to it and are compelled to speak it. The Committee has no contention with this accepted fact. This 'language-friendly' period of the child has been called 'the critical period' by Eric Lenneberg (Lenneberg, 1967 : 158). By using this term, Lenneberg also implied that beyond the 'critical period', learning of another language is possible, but the fluency with which the child learns it is never achieved after puberty. Behind Lenneberg's formulations, the ideas of Wilder Penfield (Penfield and Roberts, 1959) loomed large, who had also said that with puberty, the nurons of the brain tend to become stiff and toughened, and, as a result, less conducive to learning of languages. Therefore the a-penny-a-dozen pundits were strident in their clamour : 'The earlier English is introduced the better! Catch them young! The savants of the haloed hemisphere has mandated it!'

5.3 If needs to be told to the public that half-truths in this regard are being bandied about with abandon by these pundits. The public is never told by this academic

wheeler-dealers that the validity of the 'critical period' hypothesis has been seriously questioned in psycholinguistic research. It will suffice to quote Jean Aitchison, Professor of Linguistics, University of Oxford (Aitchison, 1989 : 89), who discusses Lenneberg's arguments in her book and concludes : "...all the arguments for a well-defined critical period are unconvincing". We should also add that Lenneberg based his 'critical period' hypothesis on the assumption that the linguistic functions (i.e., those of listening, comprehending and producing speech) of the brain are lateralized and become firmly entrenched in the left hemisphere of the brain, specifically in its two areas called Broca's Area and Wernicke's Area, as puberty sets in. After such lateralization, the child's easy and fluent capacity of accquiring a language is slowed down considerably. As we said, this conclusion has been called into serious question, more and more since the early seventies, as noted by Jill G. and Peter A de Villiers (1978 : 212-3)..."We can see that the notion of lateralization at puberty has come under increasing attack and hence the claim that it sets the limit of the critical period may no longer be valid". The proponents of English here do not have the academic honesty to let the public know of this side of the debate and carry on with their moth-eaten demand of "the earlier, the better".

5.4 Lenneberg's, and by implication Penfield's claim has been objected to on the basis of two findings. First, they could not conclusively prove that people cannot acquire fluency in a second language even after puberty. Nor, secondly, was it accepted that lateralization of linguistic functions took place only at puberty. We quote from a number of fairly recent sources to bring to the notice of the general readers the main and overwhelming critical responses to the debate :

5.4 (i) "...a good deal of evidence has been accumulated that being young is no more an advantage in language learning than in many aspects of life." (Splosky, 1989 : 94)

5.4 (ii) "Our conclusion might therefore be that it is indeed possible—, though difficult—for a post-pubertal second language learner to become a native speaker of English."

(Davos. 1995 : 156)

5.4 (iii) "There is, however, considerable evidence today that much of the development of cerebral dominance may be complete much earlier and may have little or nothing to do with the critical period."

(Krashen, 1981 : 77)

5.4 (iv) ..."there seems to be no question that puberty is an important turning point in language acquisition...it is not at all clear that the development of the cerebral dominance is related."

(Krashen, 1981 : 73)

5.4 (v) "The critical period hypothesis is an inadequte account of the role played by age in second language acquisition, because this assumption was only partially correct. Only where pronunciation is concerned is an early start an advantage, and even then only in terms of success, not rate of acquisition."

(Ellis, 1985 : 107)

5.4 (vi) "I would say that what is 'critical' about second language acquisition is not age so much as ***the circumstances in which it takes place,*** ...there are no critical periods in a child's development which are better or worse for language acquisition. Both good and poor levels of performance can be achieved with children of the same age ***depending on the social context*** (emphasis ours) in which the learning takes place."

(Romaine, 1995 : 240)

5.4 (vii) "The ill-advised notion of quick and effortless first language acquisition led the neuropsychologist Penfield to the view that this had something to do with the development of the brain in childhood."

(Klein, 1986 : 9)

5.4 (viii) "Although the question of whether children or adults are better language learners has not been given an answer supported by empirical evidence, this has not prevented theorists from speculating on what that conclusion might be...Based on his belief that children are better language learners than adults (for which he offers no substantiation), Lenneberg presented a theoretical explanation for that assumed outcome (Lenneberg, 1967, 1969). His explanation concerns the biological maturation of the brain and the fact that language tends to become located in the dominant left hemisphere of the brain (lateralization). ...Lenneberg presented a number of arguments in support of his brain maturation lateralization theory. ***Empirical research, however, has since shown those arguments to be weak or invalid."*** (emphasis ours).

(Steinberg, 1982 : 179)

5.4 (ix) "For some time there was support from certain academic fields for the idea that children's language aptitude is, in general, superior to that of older people. Perhaps as a consequence of this, and in analogy to such a belief, there was a widely held view that children make better bilinguals than adults. But as ***no scientifically based evidence suggesting that there is a biological basis for a critical period has been put forward,*** (emphasis ours), we cannot say that children have an intrinsic language ability of a superior order, with the possible exception of phonetic-auditory ability. The child may well be linguistically more adept with respect to the

acquisition of the phonological system; and certain psychological factors (relating to favourable disposition towards mimicry, playfulness and lack of inhibitive barriers) may facilitate early fluency. But that is all that we are entitled to claim.

Apart from this possible advantage, then, children cannot be said to be better billingual learners. What is more, adults possess a number of analytical skills that can stand them in good stead when learning a second language."

(Hoffmann, 1991 : 38)

5.4 (x) ..."Ideal second language acquisition is biologically feasible after the age of puberty."

(Klein, 1986 : 10, in summing up Neufeld's findings)

5.4 (xi) "A more careful evaluation of the pupil's progress in pronunciation and intonation by means of scientific procedures at the end of the experimental period led to the somewhat unexpected conclusion that pronunciation as well as understanding improved more rapidly the older the pupils were. Pupils of 11 years of age learnt more accurately and more quickly than the seven year olds."

(Stern, 1963 : 42, while reporting an experiment).

5.4 (xii) "Perhaps the research presented in this readable volume will help dissuade language planners from pursuing 'the earlier, the better' myth that persists around the globe."

(*The Modern Language Journal*, 81, 1997, in the review of the bok *The Age Factor in Second Language Acquisition,* ed. by Singleton, David and Lengyel, Clevendon, University of California, 1995)

5.4 (xiii) "...it would no longer be correct to accept the traditional dogma that the left hemisphere is necessarily dominant for language in right-handers. This doctrine was obtained from many years of study in monoinguals and it probably remains correct for most monolinguals. Evidence from studies of bilingualism, however, suggests that the brain is a plastic, dynamic organ which continues to change throughout life and environmental (e.g., educational) stimuli impinge upon it. The right hemisphere may have as much capacity to acquire language in adulthood as it does in childhood. It may even be the dominant for one of the languages of the bilingual."

(Albert, Martin and Loraine K. Obler, 1978 : 203).

5.5 Quotations like the above can be multiplied without end and the Committee has sufficient material in its possession that can provide much more that will erode the basis of the Penfield-Lenneberg hypothesis, so far as it concerns second language learning. The wide range of reactions to the hypothesis as we have placed above should be more than enough to prove that the shrill voices that swear by it represent those of academic Rip Van Winkles, whose cackling cacophones are amplified more by ignorant as well as self-blinkered newspapers than by soundness of information. It looks as though sheer political opportunism thinks nothing of adopting the questionable means of academic dishonesty in order to perpetuate a crumbling and discredited proposition. This perjury on Penfield and lunacy about Lenneberg have gone too far to be treated with silence or latitude.

5.6 Still there is no doubt about the fact that children can and do learn languages with some felicity. What implication does this universal occurrence have on the issue? The Committee has no intention of running away from this question, but humbly wants to point out that this acquisition of language takes place in what is called 'the natural language situation'. That is, children listen to the language for an extended period of the day, as they are also forced to use it in order to relate to their human environment. Such extensive scope for listening and speaking enables them to acquire the language as a 'spoken' medium. That is, they are able to 'speak' it fluently, about which there is no doubt whatever.

5.7 The Committee now asks this simple question : Can we replicate this 'natural language situation' in our primary schools? Can we create an environment where children will have long exposures to spoken English and will also have to speak it for a prolonged daily stretch? Can we provide them with the contextual situations in which they will be eager to use the language? When one thinks of the Indian primary schools, of the teachers who teach in them, of the conditions under which primary teaching is conducted one can easily see the absurdity of this proposal. An ideal second language learning situation entails the active and encouraging presence of a teacher who has almost a native speaker's command on, as well as sound knowledge of the grammar of, the second language to be taught. As everyone knows, the two skills are seldom found together in a person who has only gone through a general education course, even in one with a university degree. And the mention of instrumental aids to fecilitate this teaching-learing-process will sound like mockery.

5.8 Let us, however, accept, just for the sake of continuing the debate, that a 'natural language situation' will be made available to the students. The next question will then be : Will that *automatically* lead the children to learning the *school* language? For, as everyone knows, in school, the child learns not a spoken language,

but mostly a ***written standard variety*** of a language which may or may not be its home language. That is, the child has to read and write the language. Which means he has to learn the shape of the letters (of which English has three forms, the upper case, lower case and cursive), their arrangement in forming words and direction in which each is used, their varying pronunciations in different contexts, proper spacing between words, rules of punctuations etc. They have to learn, above all, the spelling of words which, in case of English is quite irrational, in spite of what Chomsky and Halle (1968 : 49) said by way of rationalizing them. They also have to acquire some speed in writing so that they can finish an answer within a stipulated time. In addition to these, schoolchildren have to familiarise themselves with the rudiments of the grammer of the language. They have to know which different groups of words are called nouns, pronouns or verbs, how they are organised in a sentence, and which places and roles they take (as NPs, VPs or Adverbials etc.) in the structure of the sentence. They have to find out whether the language they are learning has an SVO, VSO or SOV order, and where its word-order differs from that of their own language, etc. They will also have to learn in how many ways the same thing can be said in the language, or when the same structure means two or more different things. The children will, along with these, have to grapple with their first language interventions, and pass through several 'interlanguages' to reach a minimum level of competence in the other language. And finally, they have to read some literature of the language, on which they will be asked to answer questions. Our question is : Will all this knowledge automatically ensue from the children's speaking skill, which may be considerable? Such a claim will be a candidate for thorough academic condemnation. For, if speaking skill entailed automatic success in writing skill, then any student fluent in Standard Colloquial Bengali would have scored very high marks in the written tests of Bengali. One wishes George Barnard Shaw had made Eliza Dolittle sit for a written English test in the lowest forms of a London school and found out how she fared in it.

5.9 The Committee's doubts, it thinks, are quite well founded and these are, as expected, supported by linguistic research, as these are backed up by common experience. We quote Moulton (1970 : 30) who writes about the child learning a school language......"A number of things we teach him go beyond language in the strict sense of the term. First, we teach him to read and write, and children *do not possess an innate faculty to learn these skills effortlessly, but must work hard at them* (emphasis ours). Second, we teach him how to handle the special styles of written English, which are by no means simply the style of spoken English put down on paper. Third, we teach him such practical uses of written English as how to open and close letters, how to write and answer invitations, and the like. And finally, we teach him to read and understand some of the great things that have been written in English language."And the Committee

finds another and more recent corroboration of the above in Narasimhan (1998 : 113), who says,"...literate domain skills (i.e., writing-reading competence) do not follow automatically from oral domain skills (i.e., performance of speech acts). They have to be explicitly acquired through conscious learning and much drilling."

5.10 Where, then, the Committee humbly asks, is there a ground for so much inflating the importance of the so-called 'critical period' on which the 'early-Englishers' rest their ill-conceived theory of second language teaching? There of course are many arguments why English should be taught to Indian students, and taught, like any other subject, well, but taking refuse in a dead and long-interred hypothesis is the ultimate in the exercise of silliness.

CHAPTER : SIX

Analysis of Opinions Received

6.1 As will be seen from the Annexures, a cross-section of people, and hopefully, a representative one, including organisations came forward to interact with the Committee, both formally and informally , as they freely presented their opinions on the issue. The Committee, on most occasions, assumed the role of the passive listener and recorder. On the rare occasions it attempted to put a word edgewise, it did that only to provoke and elicit a more elaborate answer. At no time did the Committee try to influence the opinion of the parties expressing their views on the matter.

6.2 The views and opinions thus received, were in the following forms : (i) *oral,* i.e., those of teachers, guardians, members of district primary school councils and village education committees, school inspectors and other persons interested in (primary) education. The essential points of these oral presentations were put down on paper right away by the Secretary of the Committee ; (ii) ***handwritten*** : mostly as responses to the questionnaire circulated by the Committee and also as letters and memoranda sent by individuals, as parts of organised or unorganised campaign ; (iii) ***Typewritten*** : statements by experts and organizations, and (iv) *printed* memoranda by organisations.

6.3 All the opinions that have reached the Committee, can, in terms of their content, be obviously divided into two broad categories : (i) those which favoured a *status quo,* and (ii) those favouring a change. The *status quo* opinions pose no particular problem, as they have a simple and unambiguous thrust. However, those proposing a change had to situate themselves at various points with respect to the class in which English is to be started, the nature of the syllabus to be followed, the procedure and methods of evaluation to be affected. A detailed numerical statement of the opinions with relation to the above is placed below :

Total opinions/messages received	
Teachers	729
Guardians	809
Officers and other functionaries	493
Questionnaires received	773
Other communications handwritten, typed or printed	159

6.4 The opinions of the above were divided as given below : On English, where to begin it :

6.4 (i)	For *status quo*	781
6.4 (ii)	From class I	1121
6.4 (iii)	From class II	414
6.4 (iv)	From class III	508
6.4 (v)	From class IV	139

6.5 The Committee also sought their views on the evaluation practice that is followed in these schools, which is, once again, judged as a 'supply side intervention' to help the school system to retain the enrolled students. The views presented are as follows :

6.5 (i)	*Status quo* in the system of continuous evaluation	206
6.5 (ii)	Annual Test and Detention from class I	1051
6.5 (iii)	Annual Test and Detention from class II	256
6.5 (iv)	Annual Test and Detention from class III	87
6.5 (v)	Annual Test and Detention from class IV	65
6.5 (vi)	AnnualTest and Detention at class V	818*
6.5 (vii)	A Public Examination at the end of class IV	1629

**in schools having five classes in the primary section.*

6.6 Views were also expressed on the kind of syllabus to be followed. Some stated their strong preference for the Grammar–Translations Method as had been followed earlier, while some pleaded for the 'Direct Method'. Most of these were non-expert views, which little appreciated the relative merits and demerits of the methods in question. The general consensus, was, however that the functional-communicative syllabus adopted for teaching the secondary English was, by and large, a failure and it has belied the high expectations created at the time of its introduction.

6.7 When asked what was it that they wanted English at the primary level should accomplish for their children, the guardians' or the teachers' responses were neither uniform, nor clear. The following expectations were discernable :

6.7 (i) Children should be able to read bus-route numbers (although, as we found, most of them were written in Bengali in the rural areas), registration numbers of the vehicles (mostly in English), inscriptions on bus and train tickets, shop-signs, posters and banners written in English etc. And, in addition to that, they should be able to read, comprehend and speak simple English sentences. These were mostly the responses we received in the rural areas.

6.7 (ii) The urban expectations included the higher skills of being able to read English newspapers and documents, to follow English news on the electronic media, to converse with foreigners in English, faring well in job interviews conducted in English etc.

6.8 It was not the business of the Committee to ask if all this can be achieved by giving the children English lessons from class I, and that too by untrained and rather very poorly equipped teachers. The Committee is aware of a few instances of 'needs analysis' for the learners of English (for example those of Aslam, 1995 and Sood, 1995), but the above responses do not reflect any such coherent or systematic effort to analyse the needs fo the primary children. They, in fact, often blur the border of primary and higher levels of education, and anticipate as well as impose the needs of higher levels on the primary students.

6.9 An inordinate amount of journalistic sensationalism has been sought to be created by the (reportedly) poor performance at interviews by some engineering graduates of West Bengal, who could not speak English fluently. The Committee fails to understand the motives of those who circulate such news with some glee. Do they want to mean that by teaching English from the primary stage would make these students facile speakers of English and they will then sail happily through these interviews ? Then why, one may feel tempted to ask, was the ***Babu English*** ridiculed so much, even though most of the Babus had also learnt English right from the word go, as they had read their school-texts of other subjects in English? One is reminded of the words of Wright (1891, quoted in Baily, 1991 : 143) who spoke of Indian English newspapers as "badly printed, badly written," and replete with "ridiculous blunders", including arcane uses and a share of grandeloquence.

6.10 The Committee makes these remarks to convey the belief that just giving English to the teachers and the taught at the primary level will not automatically lead to fluency of speech in English. English-needs of children and adults will always be different to a large extent, and therefore, will have to be attacked differently. Those who try to confuse and conflate the two, do so for reasons that have nothing to do with the academic process.

6.11 That of course does not mean that spoken English should not be cultivated at a level that is appropriate for it. It is widely felt that the secondary syllabus and the methodology of teaching English should be suitably redesigned and restructured to accommodate more speaking exercise in the language. In this connection, the Committee is convinced that the reintroduction of a component of Compulsory English at the 3-year degree level has been a step in the right direction.

CHAPTER : SEVEN

Observations and Recommendations

7.1 As this Chapter contains the recommendations of the Committee, those who will compare the arguments put forward in the earlier chapters with what is being proposed here, may smell a mismatch between the two. They may have a feeling of *non sequitor,* —the conclusions, they may say, militate with the arguments placed in the foregoing chapters, be they neurophysiological or pedagogical. How, then, does the Committee coordinate the two?

7.2 For them, smart as they are, the Committee would simply say that it has kept its final arguments to be presented in this Chapter alone. The placement of which may begin by quoting the words of Fishman (Fishman, 1977 : 115), who says, "Languages are rarely acquired for their own sake. They are acquired as keys to other things that are desired." A similar statement is also made by Traunmuller which Fishman and Conrad quote : "...a second language will be learned if and only if the presumptive learner estimates the advantages of knowing that language to be higher than the costs." (Fishman & Conrad, 1977 : 54-55). In the primary education scene in India, it is not the learner who decides which additional language he/she has to learn, but, as is natural, the society decides it for him/her.

7.3 In the course of its visit to the primary schools and its intensive interaction with the teachers, parents, and people interested in education, the Committee was much impressed by the widespread desire for English in almost all stations of life, and in all classes and categories of people. An overwhelming majority of the parents told the Committee in clear and unambiguous terms that they wanted their wards to learn English, and learn it early. They do not simply care what the neurolinguists say, unless they say something which, coming to them second-hand and much distorted, they feel works in their favour, and they remain totally impervious about the pedagogical or logistical arguments against the early introduction of English. Nor do they ponder over how the teachers, with the present load on their hands and their inadequate command on the language, can take the extra burden of teaching it. They just want that their children are given an opportunity to learn English, "the earlier, the better". The middle class parents say this in chorus, but even those who cannot be called 'middle-class' in the strict economic sense of the term, but are aspirants to become members of it sooner or later, i.e., rickshaw-pullers, rickshaw van drivers and other members of the day-

labouring class, demand in unison that English must be a component in the syllabus at the primary stage.

7.4 The Committee has no specilized knowledge with which it can investigate, as expert, the reasons behind this demand, but it can hazard a guess or two. For one, the huge expansion of the middle-class in West Bengal during the last few decades, has brought along with it an emergence of powerful middle class aspirations,—fed, fostered and often swayed by the dream-peddling fares and advertisements of the print and electronic media. But more, perhaps, than this, was behind this swelling of the middle class in this state. The land reforms, distribution of vested lands to the landless cultivators, fixation and revision of the minimum daily wages for the labourers, decentralisation of administration through the panchayats that has made contacts with authorities easy for the common man, expansion and improvement of surface communications and transport, opportunities of education made more plentiful,—have all contributed to this burgeoning of the middle-class, highly increasing, in its wake, also the number of 'middle class aspirants' moving into the peripheral zone of the circle in which the regular middle class resided.

7.5 This is an achievement of which West Bengal can justly be proud, for this is where democracy seems to have taken deep roots and working well. But such empowerment of the people creates its own demands and the people begin to desire for the 'good things in life', as they imagine them. Which is to be encouraged by all means, in order to pull them out of the mire of historical deprivations. In this region (i.e., South Asia) of the world, a region that has been described as "the poorest, the most illiterate, the least gender-sensitive—indeed the most deprived region of the world" (Huq, 1997 : 2), even after half a century since it has ceased to be a colony, progress in terms of human development has always been uneven, and elusive to the majority. There has always been a class of elites who have enjoyed all the milk and honey of the land, and the vast majority of the area was marked for exclusion from all privileges. The elite babus seldom told the non-babus what it meant to be human in a civilized world,—what kind of life they were entitled to have just by being human and nothing else. This is still largely the reality of this region, but there are pockets where things seem to be changing. The Committee feels that West Bengal is one of them. Here the walls protecting the babudom have been broken, and those who were condemned to remain outside the charmed circle are now ready to enter it, as they are being equipped either educationally or economically or both.

7.6 This exclusion or dominance by a privileged class having been broken, it has become a part of the common expectation of these neo-middle-class as also of the aspirants that their children should rise high up the social ladder, and English is

perceived as a tool for this ascent. It has nothing to do with the merit of the language or the literature. In strictly linguistic terms, English has no more merit than any other language to qualify as a better subject of instruction. Burchfield drives this point home when he observes (Birchfield, 1994 : xvi) that "A quasi-Darwinian approach to English might attempt to account for the widespread use by claiming that somehow English is more suited, better adapted, to use as an international language than others. But that is nonsense. English is no more fit than, say, Spanish or Chinese. The reason for this spread of English is political, cultural and economic rather than linguistic." On one hand it is simply the bread-and-butter considerations, —English being deemed as the language of better opportunities, and, on the other, its additional features of prestige and power that are being sought to be assimilated by this emerging class, with more consumerist orientation than before.

7.7 The Committee, as indicated earlier, finds nothing wrong with these aspirations, as it notes with some sadness that we in West Bengal have not been able to create and maintain, in the decades following the Independence, a *written environment* of Bengali, as a neighbouring country of Bengali speakers has been successful in doing. There we can find the 'visible' presence of Bengali everywhere. This visibility has at least two aspects. One, the messages are written in Bengali—milestones, roadsigns, numbers on the car license plates, brand-names and other information and instructions on packages and cartons ; receipts, forms of various kinds—both governmental and non-governmental, are all written in the language of the land and the child or a young person who grows up in this scriptal environment, learns to value this language. In West Bengal, this did not happen. Here most of the signs and inscriptions are in English. If, in the rural areas, we may find signs in Bengali, the 'names' of the stores are often in English language, as, for example., স্নো হোয়াইট লন্ড্রি, মা তারা হার্ডওয়্যার স্টোর্স, ইয়াসিন কার রিপেয়ারিং অ্যান্ড ওয়েল্ডিং শপ, দি চট্টগ্রাম মুলিবাঁশ কোম্পানি, মডার্ন টেলার্স etc. The other aspect which needs to be mentioned is that English is also held to be a prestige code, and a symbol of status. We can see various organisations working for the uplift of the poorer section of the people, many NGO's among them, often parade names like 'Committee for Cultural Creation', 'West Bengal Rural Reconstruction Service', 'Tagore Society for Village Development' etc. where Bengali names would have been perfectly functional and well understood by the village people for whose welfare they are supposed to work. There is also a general complaint that the State Government does not use Bengali to the extent it can, and there is a manifest reluctance among the officials to use Bengali in notes meant for internal consumption. During the Committee's visit to the districts, invitation from the DPSC's to its members were issued in English, which was often criticised by the members of the councils themselves. In such an environment, a growing and learning child may often have a feeling of inadequacy without a

smattering of English, as he/she cannot read the roadsigns or mileposts, or, as they say, the number of the routes of buses. The parents also feel that the child is having an education which is insufficient for its daily needs. This lack of agreement between the learning goals or needs of the child and the range of its possible use by the learner relates to the relevance of English as a 'language of wider communications', which has not declined during the last half century.

7.8 It all adds to the relative importance and prestige that English commands in the minds of the people, apart from its felt worth as a language of wider communication. The Committee does not hold a particular state of society responsible for this arrangement of linguistic hierarchy. Our colonial past and post-imperial compulsion of using English as a medium of higher education have led us to this state of affairs, and there is a lack of national will for moving out of it. Also, the opening of the country's economy to foreign multi-national and trans-national corporations as a precondition for economic liberalization, has also contributed to the high profile of English which it enjoys. Being a state of a nation, West Bengal cannot decide for itself a policy of linguistic autonomy which is not consonant with that of the rest of the country.

7.9 One other factor that has also been behind this sudden spurt in the desire for early learning English is the widespread feeling that, as we have noted earlier, teaching of English at the secondary level has not improved even after the adoption of the new functional-communicative method. The Committee has no idea if this feeling is supported by systematic surveys or comparative research in the area. Some journalistic exposures of mistakes committed by Madhyamik candidates have poor theoretical value, since as long as there is a subject in the school curriculum, mistakes in the answer-scripts of examinations will be a dime a dozen. It will be quite easy to collect samples of them from such scripts of not-so-meritorious students, or even to concoct them, for cheap journalistic 'scoop'. This, however, should not deter us from taking a close look at the status of English teaching in the secondary as well as higher secondary schools and review its success or otherwise. The Committee had this impression, shared and expressed by many of the teachers' organisations of the state, that the new methodology of teaching English in the state schools suffers from, (i)a lack of understanding and acceptance in a section of teachers, (ii) absence of the requisite teacher-student ratio in most of the schools that would have made the programme a viable one, and (iii) constraints of teaching time that such a method demands. These impressions are widespread, and a serious exercise should begin immediately to improve the quality of English teaching at the secondary level and beyond.

7.10 In addition to this, some measures are necessary to break the compartmentalisation that exists between the primary and secondary levels, particularly

with respect to English. Teachers of both the levels should interact with each other, in order to decide what they expect from each other. Similar dialogues may be conducted between language teachers (those teaching English and those teaching Indian languages) at all levels of education, so that one can benefit from the experience and insights of the others. Language-cum-literature education can be regarded as a single process, in whichever language it may be conducted, and teachers should act on a cooperative principle which, we are sure, will enrich the teaching of all.

7.11 We come back to the guardians, who notice something else that is taking place in the urban and semi-urban areas. The so-called 'nursery' and 'kindergarten' schools are mushrooming everywhere, and children with uniforms, shoes and neckties are making a bee-line for them. They are, of course, wards of parents who can afford to pay at least Rs. 50 a month to these schools. But the parents who cannot afford this and send their children to free primary or junior basic schools, cannot be faulted if they nurture a feeling that they are being shortchanged by the planners of education just because they are poor. That their own Government should deprive their children an opportunity of 'empowerment' is a thought they do not want to entertain, and therefore the Committee was clearly told that they wanted English at the primary level.

7.12 The Committee also learnt about some problem-areas in the practice of continuous evaluation of the students that is now being followed. Although this does not strictly fall within the Committee's terms of reference, it is constrained to comment on this in the larger interest of primary education. Parents, the Committee found everwhere, were not impressed with the efficacy of this evaluation system. The most commonly used expression was : "Even the chairs and tables are being promoted now". They still ruminate on the familiar icons of the traditional examination systems, i.e., printed question papers, answer scripts, and marks on them given by the examiners and an order of merit on the basis of these marks. The system of continuous evaluation has not so far been able to build up a parallel system of icons which is as effective and acceptable as the older one. It is of course easiest to blame the teachers for the putative failure of this measure, but the Committee was aware of reasons that were beyond the teachers' control. It may of course be the case that not all teachers are equally motivated to teach or evaluate in this way. But continuous evaluation also becomes difficult to conduct when a sizeable number of students are found to be very irregular and attend school only occasionally, i.e., twice or thrice a week or even less. They have to mind the household when the parents are away at work, look after a young brother or sister or tend cattle or goats. Attendance on the Rice-giving Day ("chaler din") and those in its vicinity swells up, to decline on others. Once these students begin to be out of step, they find themselves trapped in the Achilles and the Tortoise syndrome, the gap

between their efforts and achievements increasing day by day. Soon they proceed to add to the number of drop-outs which are a bane of Indian primary education.

7.13 One must hasten to add that, if irregular attendance is a problem in the primary schools, full attendance has also its attendant problems. If the school has full classes, it is quite often very difficult for the teacher to evaluate all the students with a fare amount of attention and care, as, in many schools, the teacher-student ratio is hardly conducive to efficient teaching. This is another reason why corrective measures for backsliding students cannot be effectively undertaken. The teacher has simply no time to go back to those who are being left behind even if school hours are stretched a little. We are however happy to note that the Burdwan District Primary School Council has, with the cooperation of the teachers of primary schools, introduced an extra half hour of coaching for these backward students, mostly those belonging to 'Chhoto One' (see below), consisting of first generation learners. We hope this commendable example will be followed in other districts.

7.14 Teaching and evaluation at the earliest stage has another insuperable difficulty that hinders their progress. The Committee discovered with some surprise which must have been a fact of life to others for long, that in most rural and backward urban areas, there existed a sharp divide among the students of class I, between those who come from non-literate households and those who come from literate ones, the latter equipped with a knowledge of the alphabet or beyond. This 'shadow' class I, popularly called 'Chhoto One' and the more apparent (often the only one formally recognised in school register), the 'Baro One' sit in the same room. This arrangement cries out for two separate approaches of teaching the first lessons which the teacher has neither the time nor the environment to offer. The presence of the tribal students in this class in many districts of West Bengal makes matters worse, as many of them have a home language that is totally different from what they have to learn in school.[1] The 'Chhoto One', therefore fights an uneven battle in the class to end up almost equally handicapped at the end of the term, and they swell up the number of dropouts. If some alternative arrangements for teaching them the alphabet is not done,[2] their chances of progress will not brighten just by staying in school. A teacher, often with sixty or seventy students in such a class, overcrowded also by the underage younger brothers or sisters of the students (who have to bring them to school to babysit), does not have the time nor the mind to evenly distribute his/her attention to the differential needs of these unequal groups, and it is the more advanced group which ultimately reaps the benefit of teaching.

7.15 We therefore found a clear dissonance prevailing between the administrative philosophy of Indian primary education and the perception of the West Bengal

guardians with whom we interacted, about the methods and goals of primary education. It however is nothing unexpected, as guardians look at the system from an angle of individual dreams and aspirations, while the national planners have to structure it on the basis of 'national' goals. Automatic promotion and no-detention policies have been questioned on pedagogical grounds (***Primary Education in India,*** 1997 : 73), but they had to be introduced as "one way to reduce repetation" in classes. It was noticed that "Primary level dropout rates are lower in the states that require automatic promotion for at least some of the earlier grades." The guardians we interviewed do not probably appreciate the import of the above statement. They are, as we found, not much overwhelmed by this "supply-side intervention." In this context of declining dropout rates which still continue to be "unacceptabley high", this disagreement between the national philosophy of primary education and the perceptions of the guardians needs to be resolved.

7.16 Having carefully considered all the above, The Committee therefore recommends the following :

7.16 (i) Teaching of English, with the aid of an appropriately devised text, be started in class III.

7.16 (ii) Some informal arrangement of teaching the alphabet and combination of letters to form simple, monosyllabic words, may be made after the first semester of class II. The devices of joyful learning may be employed here, and the alphabet may be taught in a rhyme, with a colourful chart of the letters accompanying it. Children should not be asked to write them in class II.

7.16 (iii) Apart from the continuous evaluation system, which has to be implemented with more rigour and an orientation towards definite goals, no test in English need be taken, nor detention affected on its basis till the end of class IV.

7.16 (iv) A public test after class IV may be reintroduced.

7.16 (v) As the Committee does not feel itself competent, it advises the Department of School Education to form an Expert Committee immediately to consider detailed syllabus for classes III and IV. The Experts will also suggest suitable restructuring of, and adjustments with, the syllabuses of class V and above.

7.17 The Committee found the demand for beginning English from class I untenable in view of the situation that obtains in rural West Bengal. Most of the children there have a home language, no doubt a dialect of Bengali, which is more or less distant

from the school Bengali, i.e., the Standard Colloquial Written dialect of Bengali they have to learn to read, write, and, in addition to that, speak to an extent. They have therefore to cross a dialect barrier in order to reach the standard language. For tribal students who find themselves in a minority situation in many schools, it is a language wall that they have to cross. English for many of them is almost a third language, too early introduction of which would prove a heavy burden.

7.18 The Committee also urges the teachers not to be contemptuous in their action or attitude about the home language the students may like to use in school. This is the language, be it a dialect or a tribal language, in which the child is the most free to express itself, and it should be encouraged to do so. The science of linguistics does not admit of any inherent superiority of any language or dialect, and an imposition of linguistic superiority by the teacher will fail to elicit the best and most natural response from the student. We therefore request the teachers to be sensitive and cautious about the way he/she treats the home language of the student.

7.19 The Committee feels that the Government should seriously consider appointing or providing new teachers to schools which need them badly. The single-teacher or two-teacher schools are in immediate need of extra manpower and should have priority in this regard. Also, primary teachers have this unenviable role of being masters of all things taught in their school. For English at least they will need some training or orientation, for which the Institute of English in Calcutta may be asked to devise a programme or, as an easier and less costly alternative, create an eassy-to-follow manual in Bengali/English which the teacher can use to plan his/her teaching of English.

7.20 Finally, the Committee strongly requests the Government and the Department in question to review the results of its recommendations after five years. Such a review will examine their possible effect on figures of enrolment, cases of repetation in classes, incidence of dropouts etc., as on the general performance of the students, and such a review will enable the authorities to take suitable measures for obviating negative impacts, if any, of these recommendations.

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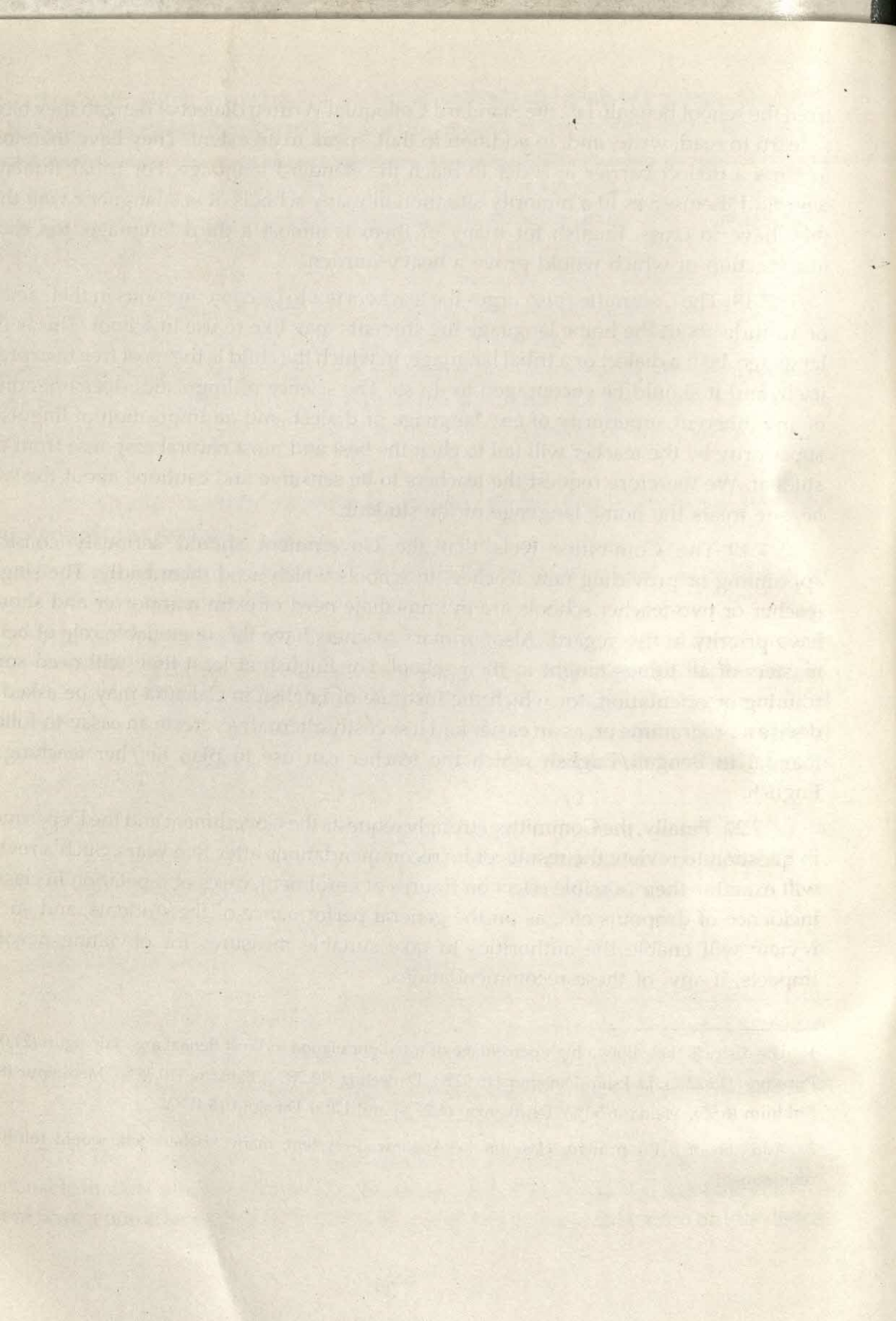
1. The districts that show a high percentage of tribal population in West Bengal are : Jalpaiguri (21.04%), Puruliya (19.22%), Dakshin Dinajpur (16.92%), Darjeeling (13.78%), Bankura (10.34%), Medinipur (8.27), Birbhum (6.95), Malda (6.50%), Bardhaman (6.21%) and Uttar Dinajpur (5.41%).

2. Addition of a Pre-primary class or the Anganwadi system, many teachers felt, would fulfill this requirement.

Primary schools visited :

12.5.1998 North 24-Parganas (5 schools)

1. Kalikrishna Girls' Primary School
2. Barbaria Primary School
3. Haritala Colony Primary School.
4. Priya Nath Institution
5. Sadarpur Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

13.5.1998 Mednipur (5 schools)

1. Rangamati Kironmoyee Primary School
2. Munshi Patua Primary School
3. Smritikana Primary School
4. Shatkui Primary School
5. Manashi Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

14.5.1998 Bankura (5 schools)

1. Mahamaya Primary School
2. Bighna Primary School
3. Sanabandh Primary School
4. Badulara Primary School
5. Salboni Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

18.5.1998 Murshidabad (6 schools)

1. Palsunda No. 18 Primary School
2. Berhampore Collegiate Primary School
3. Joychand Khagra F. C. Primary School
4. Maharani Kasiswari Girls' Primary School
5. Muktinagar Primary School
6. Maharajpur Jr. Basic School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

19.5.1998 Malda (6 schools)

1. Naldubi Primary School
2. Mahadevpur P. C. P. Primary School
3. Nemna Primary School
4. Bansbari Primary School
5. South Baluchar Primary School
6. No. 2 Govt. Colony Girls' Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

20.5.1998 Uttar Dinajpur (7 schools)

1. Suharoy Primary Vidyalaya
2. Lahanda J. B. Primary School
3. Rampur Jr. Basic School
4. Arthagram Free Primary School
5. Lakshania Primary School
6. Manzgar Primary School
7. Hindol Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

21.5.1998 Jalpaiguri (7 schools)

1. Sadar Girls' Primary School
2. Sanaullah Primary School
3. Kadamtala Girls' School
4. Saudagarpara Primary School
5. Bhubanmoyee Primary School
6. Pandapara Jr. Basic Primary School
7. Arabinda Nagar Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

22.5.1998 Coochbehar (7 schools)

1. Sishutirtha G. S. F. Primary School
2. Balapare Khagrapara New Primary School
3. Baisguri Govt. Primary School
4. Nilkuthi Udbastu Primary School
5. Chhat Ghugumari R. R. Primary School
6. New Town Girls' Jr. Basic School
7. Sishuniketan G. S. F. School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

23.5.1998 Siliguri, Darjeeling (4 schools)

1. Siliguri Boys' High School (Pry. Section)
2. Rabindra Vidyapith
3. Matigara Hindi Primary School
4. Matigara G. S. F. Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

24.5.1998 Krishnanagar, Nadia

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

20.6.1998 South 24-Parganas (10 schools)

1. Manmathanath Jr. Basic School
2. Rajpur Padmamanil Girls' Primary School
3. Suhasini Girls' Primary School
4. Kodalia Vidhan Vidyapith
5. Chandpur F. P. School (Sonarpur)
6. Gobindapur Kamini Devi F. P. School.
7. Chandhasi 'D' Block Jr. Basic (F. P.) School
8. Ramchandrapur F. P. School
9. Khila Jr. Basic School
10. Kamal Gazi F. P. School

23.6.1998 Howrah (5 schools)

1. Phanindranath K. G. Home (Pry. School) (Ward No. 19, Sadar North)
2. Matribhaban Primary School (Girls)
3. Ukhalia F. P. School (Bankra Circle)
4. Shalap Jr. Basic School (-do-)
5. Nabh-Dara Tafsili Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

3.7.1998 & 4.7.1998 Burdwan (7 schools)

1. Ataghar Tajpur Primary School (1972)
2. Masjidpara Primary School (1972) V-class
3. Barsul Jr. Basic Primary School
4. Saktigarh Jr. Basic School, V-class
5. Jadunath Pally Primary School, V-class

6. Ramnarayan Sashibhusan Primary Vidyalaya, V-class
7. Burdwan Municipal Girls' School

Meeting District Magistrate's representatives, Chairman & Members, Dist. Primary Council, Inspecting Officers and Others.

5.7.1998 & 6.7.1998 Birbhum (7 schools)

1. R. T. Girls' Primary School
2. Suri G. S. F. Primary School
3. Karl Marx Smriti Primary Vidyalaya
4. Kalitala Behira Primary School
5. Sekampur Adibasi Primary School
6. Purandarpur Jr. Basic School
7. Boys' Maktab Primary School

Meeting Sabhadhipati, Zilla Parashad, Chairman and members, Dist. Primary Council, Inspecting Officers and Others.

7.7.1998 Purulia (4 schools)

1. Chakdah Primary School
2. Kotlui Primary School
3. Beleguma Primary School
4. Rishi Arbinda Sishu Vidyaniketan

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

20.7.1998 Dakshin Dinajpur (4 schools)

1. Teor Basic Primary School
2. Bhawani Primary School
3. Kurmail Jr. Basic School
4. Malancha Fre Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

27.7.1998 Calcutta (7 schools)

1. Muralidhar Girls' Primary School
2. Chittaranjan Jatiya Vidyalaya
3. Kasba Girls' Primary School
4. Jamini Pal Primary School
5. Bagha Jatin Balika Girls's Primary School

6. Saroj Nalini Primary School
7. Ballygunge Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

28.7.1998 & 29.7.1998 Hooghly (10 schools)

1. Balika Bani Mandir
2. Deshbandhu Memorial Primary School
3. Mallickbati Pathsala
4. Binodini Girls' School
5. Hooghly Girls' Primary School
6. Hooghly Balika Primary School
7. St. John Primary School (Bengali Medium)
8. Paikpara Sarvodaya Vidyalaya
9. Haji Md. Mahsin F. P. School (Urdu)
10. Andhra Bharatiya Primary School (Telugu)

Meeting the Chairman and members, Dist. Primary School Council, Inspecting staff, Teachers' Associations and other Persons interested in education.

31.7.1998 Nadia (8 schools)

1. Muragachha Primary Vidyalaya
2. Prajnananda Jr. Basic School
3. Fatepur Primary Vidyalaya
4. Dakshin Duttapara Primary School
5. Haripuria Jangal Ch. Ghosh Smriti Vidyamandir
6. Bara Jaguli Gopal Academy Primary School
7. Kapileswar Primary School
8. Anandpur G. S. F. Primary School

Meeting members of the District Primary School Council, Inspecting Staff and others.

Organisations/Representatives met by the Committee :

— Paschim Banga Prathamik Sikshak Samity, 113A, Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose Road, Calcutta.

— Sara Bangla Sikshak-O-Siksha Karmi Samity, (SBSSS) State Committee, 124C, Lenin Sarani, Calcutta.

— All Bengal Primary Teachers' Association, 89, Mahatma Gandhi Road, Calcutta.

— Bangiya Sikshak-O-Siksha Karmi Sangha, 26, Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta.

— All Bengal Teachers' Association, Ganesh Avenue, Calcutta.

— Bangiya Prathamik Sikshak Samiti, 202D, B. B. Ganguli Street, Calcutta.

— Prathamik Sikshak Sangha, West Bengal Rajya Committee, 138, Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta.

— Prathamik Sikshak Kalyan Samity, West Bengal.

— Bengal Teachers' & Employees' Association, 208, B. B. Ganguli Street,Calcutta.

— Sara Bangla Prathamik Sikshak Samiti, State Committe, West Bengal, 124C, Lenin Sarani, Calcutta.

— Secondary Teachers' and Employees' Association, 31/1, Beniatola Lane, Calcutta.

— Paschim Banga Vidyalaya Paridarshak Samiti, 23, Pataldanga Street, Calcutta.

— Paschimbanga Retired Teachers' and Employees' Association, Calcutta.

— Steering Committee of Paschimbanga State Government Employees' Association, 13B, Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta.

— Paschimbanga Krishi Sramik Union, Rajya Committee, 138, Bidhan Sarani, Calcutta.

— Paschimbanga Bijnan Macha, Calcutta.

— Editor, *Trina Gulma Mrittika* (Mrittika Sahitya Sabha), Calcutta.

— Organisation for Educational Innovations Development, Khantura, North 24-Parganas.

— West Bengal Primary Teachers' Association, Calcutta District Branch, Calcutta.

— Bhasha O Chetana Samiti, DB 43A Shastri Bagan, Calcutta-59.

— Suprabhas, Kharagpur, Mednipur

Individuals who have met the Committee voluntarily or on the latter's invitation :

— Professor Paromesh Acharya, formerly of the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta.
— Professor Surabhi Banerjee, Department of English, University of Calcutta.
— Professor Malini Bhattacharya, Department of English, Jadavpur University.
— Professor Snehamoy Chakladar, Sociolinguist.
— Professor Tirthankar Chattopadhyay, Department of English, University of Kalyani.
— Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri, Department of English, Jadavpur University.
— Professor Supriya Chaudhuri, Department of English, Jadvapur University.
— Shri Asit Ranjan Dasgupta, Member, P. G. Faculty of Commerce, Social Welfare and Business Management, University of Calcutta.
— Ms. Mary Anne Dasgupta, Educationist with specialisation on the child learner.
— Azizul Haque, Calcutta.
— Dr. Samit Kar, Director, State Institute for Panchayat Research & Development, Kalyani.
— Dr. Sanat Karmakar, Calcutta.
— Professor Bhabesh Moitra, Chairman, West Bengal State Council for Primary Education.
— Prof. Ratna Sanyal-Bhattacharya, Teacher, English Vocational Course, Gokhale Memorial College, Calcutta.
— Joe Winter, British poet and critic.

Other experts who have interacted with the Committee through personal communications :

— Prof. S. K. Agrawal, University of Manipur, Imphal.
— Professor Probal Dasgupta, Centre for Socio-linguistics and Translation Studies, Hyderabad Central University.
— Lachman M. Khabchandani, Pune.

Excerpts from the opinions of Scholars

A PROPOSAL FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN WEST BENGAL
Submitted to the Prof. Pabitra Sarkar One-Man Committee

Sukanta Chaudhuri
Professor of English, Jadavpur University

Preliminaries and Rationale :

1. I would suggest commencing the teaching of English in primary schools in West Bengal at the earliest possible stage. I do not base this suggestion on any view about the 'best' or 'scientifically' determined age for learning a second language. I hold that, given proper methods and motivation, a language can be learned well at any age from 5 to 50 ; and that in the present state of our knowledge, no convincing neuro-physiological basis can be found for prescribing a particular age in any absolute sense. In any case, such prescriptions will only apply to 'clinical' or 'laboratory' conditions that do not obtain in real life.

The choice of a suitable stage for teaching English in West Bengal should rather be based on practical and social factors. These have been so extensively discussed that there is no need to recount them in detail here. Still, the following one-page resume seems necessary :

a. A large section of parents and students in West Bengal—by no means exclusively from the educated middle class—feel emphatically that a working knowledge of English is needed to advance in life in our state ; that this knowledge needs to be imparted from an earlier stage than at present ; and that students studying in state-supported, Bengali medium schools are losing out by commencing the study of English at a relatively late stage. There is a measure of emotivity in this widespread view, but there are also solid reasons. In any case, such public perceptions acquire the status of a material reality.

b. The simultaneous presence of a system of English-medium education—not merely a system where English is taught from Class 1—has created a two-teir school system, patronized even by many parents who verbally defend the teaching of English at a later stage. This dual system has been operative through living memory, but has been vastly exacerbated since English teaching in the Bengali-medium schools was relegated to Class 6. (Advancing it to Class 5 has not brought about any material change, either in standards or perceptions.) This duality is working untold mischief, not only in terms of educational and professional inequalities but through the creation of great social pressures and conflicts.

c. The delayed teaching of English has made a large number of parents from the professional middle classes (including the writer of this note) abandon the idea of enrolling their children in Bengali-medium schools. This is a major factor in the serious deterioration, not always in academic standards but more crucially in administration, morale and environment, in the state-supported Bengali-medium school system that forms the bedrock of education in our state. It has also led to the mushrooming of a large number of English-medium teaching-shops of very dubious credentials and insatiable appetite for money. Unless these two related tendencies are checked, there will be a disaster in the entire schooling system in West Bengal. The disaster may not be far off.

d. Special attention should be drawn to the recent disclosure that students in our technological courses, while highly competent in their professional training, lose out in skills and opportunities because of their grossly inadequate knowledge of English. In theory, there is no reason why they should not acquire good English even after beginning in Class 5 or indeed later ; but in practice, the social and mental blocks to such acquisition are likely to be removed more successfully by exposing them to the language at an earlier age.

2. Another major factor needs to be borne in mind. Even within the Bengali-medium schools, students differ vastly in their exposure to English in the formative years, before they officially begin studying the language in Class 5. Children from educated and affluent families, specially in urban locations, pick up English from their parents, family and social circles ; from the use of English in print, hoardings, television, etc., etc. all around them ; and often from private instruction at home or even surreptitiously at school. Children of poor or ill-educated parents, first-generation learners above all, have no such opportunity. If both groups of children begin to learn English officially from Class 5, they do not find a level playing-field.

The later we start the formal teaching of English, the greater will be the handicap imposed on underprivileged pupils. Moreover, given the vast number of drop-outs, children leaving school at an early stage will never acquire any English at all, not even the rudimentary reading skill required to make their way through their daily round of activities at the humblest level. I would submit that, in the present and foreseeable state of our society, this is one major disadvantage among the innumerable others that school drop-outs suffer.

Proposals :

3. which class to start from? Given the above factors, it might seem logical to start the teaching of English in Class 1. This may, however, pose a great problem in that children will have to acquire two alphabets at the same time. While this may not be impossible—urban middle-class children routinely perform the feat—it will place severe strain on a large body of children, specially first-generation learners, children from remote rural areas, and others who have little or no exposure even to the Bengali alphabet in their daily lives.

I would therefore suggest that the teaching of English be commenced in Class 2.

4. Course content. I would suggest that in the initial stages, the curriculum should be very short and simple. Indeed, the aim in Classes 2 and 3 should be not so much to teach the children a substantial amount of English as to break the barrier of fear and alienation that disadvantaged children feel towards the language.

In Class 2, the children should be taught only the alphabet, a very short working vocabulary (100-200 words), and the basic Subject-Verb-Object structure of a simple sentence. (This corresponds roughly to what the Prof. Ashok Mitra Commission proposed for Class 5.) This basis should be extended in class 3, so that by the end of Class 3, the Children have reached the approximate level of skill envisaged in Step 1 of the present 'Learning English' series, modified as follows :

a. Till, say, the end of Class 3, the stress should be on 'passive' skills—i.e., the ability to read or hear simple English and understand it—and the most rudimentary structures of composition.

b. No stress should be laid on correct pronunciation or (at this stage) on complex idioms. The aim is to acquire a working command of English, not to handle it like native Englishmen—which is in any case an exploded concept in this day and age.

5. Assessment. While some testing is obviously necessary to gauge the progress of the pupils, there should be no formal tests up to Class 5, and no system of 'pass' or 'fail' in English till that stage. Indeed, even if the system of 'passing' or 'failing' students is reintroduced at the primary level, the pupils progress in English should not be taken into account for this purpose up to and including Class 5.

6. Methods. The author of this note is not a specialist in teaching methods. However, common sense and practical experience suggest that the more sophisticated a method, the greater its chances of failure in practical terms in our grossly imperfect conditions. This seems to have been the case with the functional-communicative method adopted in the 'Learning English' series. It presupposes a high degree of working English skills that, sadly, a large proportion of our teachers do not possess and cannot acquire through training, supposing such training to be available. It also presupposes certain norms regarding size of class, nature of premises and infrastructure, time available, etc. that do not obtain in the great majority of our schools.

(I base these observations on extensive interaction with school teachers at workshops and interviews, as well as through private knowledge and reports from intelligent students, training-college teachers and educational surveyors. I may add that, though I have made no statistical survey, 28 years experience with students of high performance—chiefly H.S. first-divisioners—have left me with the strong impression that the level of English in Bengali-medium schools has indeed declined since the language was taught from Class 6.)

With due respect to the expertise of the putative course designers, I would therefore suggest that they seriously consider reintroducing relatively 'crude' and

'primative' methods including the 'translation method', or other ways of exploiting the bilingualism of our society. This is a most useful pedagogic and cultural tool that we should exploit instead of suppressing. I would also suggest with due respect that methods of Second-Language Teaching devised in monolingual countries such as Britain be scrutinized with great caution before they are adopted in a bilingual culture like ours. They may need considerable adaptation, if indeed they prove valid at all in our context. We should remember that few teachers, if any, manage to teach the English course without extensive recourse to Bengali for explanation, and commonly by virtual practice of the formally discarded 'translation method'.

7. Extent of course. If English teaching is commenced and conducted as suggested above, I think it would be entirely feasible, and socially and pedagogically desirable, to make it optional at a relatively early stage. This would ensure that all students acquire the rudiments of English at an early stage, to enable them to cope with everyday needs even if they do not study further. At the same time, those who carry on into high school need not be 'burdened' by the subject if they feel no further need for it, or if they prove competent in other subjects but flounder in English. In practice, I think that, if taught as suggested above from Class 2, the great majority will feel at home with English by the end of Class 8, and want to carry on with it : certainly all ambitious students will do so. Given the higher motivation of such voluntary participants, they can be taught fairly advanced English to some purpose. At the same time, the less ambitious or capable will be allowed to dispense with it.

If all-India norms allow, If would suggest that English be made optional from Class 9. If, however, all-India norms require the school-leaving examination (Madhyamik) to have English as a compulsory subject, it should definitely be made optional from Class 11. This will also allow a reallocation of staff to meet the demands of English teaching in the lower classes. In any case, the amount of English I am proposing for Classes 2 and 3 should be within the competence of the teachers already appointed to teach those classes. That the number of such teachers is grossly in adequate, and their competence sometimes in question, are separate issues to be tackled on a different basis.

ড. স্নেহময় চাকলাদার
সমাজবিজ্ঞানী

প্রশ্ন হল, বামফ্রন্ট সরকারের ভাষা সংক্রান্ত শিক্ষা নীতি গণমুখীন ও বিজ্ঞানসম্মত হওয়া সত্ত্বেও এর বিরুদ্ধে জনমত কেন ক্রমেই তীব্র হয়ে উঠছে? এই নীতি প্রবর্তিত হওয়ার একুশ বছর পরে কেন এর বিরোধিতা করে একটি সাধারণ ধর্মঘট অনুষ্ঠিত হয়েছে? কেন এই বিরোধিতা সামাল দিতে অধ্যাপক পবিত্র সরকারের নেতৃত্বে এক সদস্য বিশিষ্ট কমিশন বসানো হয়েছে? তাহলে সত্যিই কি এই নীতির মধ্যে কোন ত্রুটি রয়ে গেছে, না প্রয়োগের মধ্যে কোন অসামঞ্জস্য রয়ে গেছে?

আমাদের ধারণা, শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রে ভাষানীতি কার্যকরী করার পথে যে অসামঞ্জস্যের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে, সে কারণেই এই নীতির বিরুদ্ধে জনমত ক্রমেই বলিষ্ঠ আকার ধারণ করছে। নিতান্তই রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্য প্রণোদিত হয়ে এর বিরোধিতা করা হচ্ছে না। নিম্নে তার কয়েকটি কারণ উল্লেখ করা হল—

(১) এ বিষয়ে সকলেই অবগত আছেন যে, শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রে ভাষা শিক্ষার সাথে প্রশাসনিক ক্ষেত্রে ভাষা ব্যবহারের সম্পর্ক খুবই বলিষ্ঠ, অর্থাৎ প্রশাসনিক ক্ষেত্রে যে ভাষা ব্যবহৃত হবে, শিক্ষার মাধ্যমও সেই ভাষায় হওয়া আবশ্যক। ১৯৭৭ সালে বামফ্রন্ট সরকার ক্ষমতায় আসার অনতিকালের মধ্যেই বিভিন্ন সারকুলারের মাধ্যমে প্রশাসনিক ক্ষেত্রে ইংরেজীর স্থলে বাংলা প্রবর্তনের জন্য নির্দেশ প্রদান করা হয়। প্রথমদিকে তথ্য ও প্রচারমন্ত্রী বুদ্ধদেব ভট্টাচার্য্যের উদ্যোগে প্রশাসনে বাংলা ভাষা ব্যবহারের উদ্যোগ চলে। কিন্তু আশির দশক হতে এ ব্যাপারে ভাটা পড়ে। ফলে বামফ্রন্ট সরকারের শাসনের একুশ বছর পরেও প্রশাসনিক ক্ষেত্রে প্রধান ইংরেজী ভাষাই ব্যবহৃত হয়। সবচেয়ে দুঃখজনক হল এই যে, শিক্ষা দপ্তরের যাবতীয় সারকুলার, নোটিশ ইংরেজী ভাষার মাধ্যমেই প্রচার করা হয়।

(২) সরকারী নীতির আরও অসামঞ্জস্য দেখা যায় শিক্ষা ক্ষেত্রে ইংরেজী ভাষা ব্যবহারে। যদিও সরকার বাংলা ভাষার মাধ্যমে সর্বস্তরে শিক্ষাদানের নীতি ঘোষণা করেন। তথাপি বেশীরভাগ সরকারী কলেজে ইংরেজীর মাধ্যমে শিক্ষাদানের রীতি প্রচলিত আছে।

(৩) সরকারী উদ্যোগে পরিচালিত জয়েণ্ট এন্ট্রান্স পরীক্ষা, স্টাফ সিলেকশন পরীক্ষা প্রভৃতিতে ইংরেজীর প্রাধান্য বজায় থাকে। ১০০ নম্বরের একটি ইংরেজী পেপার আবশ্যিক থাকে। সাম্প্রতিকালে অনুষ্ঠিত স্কুল সার্ভিস কমিশনের পরীক্ষার প্রশ্নপত্র শুধুমাত্র ইংরেজী ভাষায় রচিত হয়। এর ফলে ইংরেজী মাধ্যমে পড়া ছাত্রছাত্রীরা যে বিশেষ সুবিধা লাভ করতে পারবে, তাতে সন্দেহের কোন অবকাশ থাকে না। 'দেশ' পত্রিকায় এক অনুসন্ধানের মাধ্যমে সে তথ্য প্রকাশ পেয়েছে, তাতে দেখা যায় যে, উচ্চ শিক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে সেরা ছাত্রদের মধ্যে শতকরা ৭০ ভাগ ছাত্রছাত্রী এসেছে ইংরেজী মাধ্যমের বিদ্যালয় থেকে। সমগ্র উচ্চ শিক্ষা ব্যবস্থা, কারিগরী শিক্ষা এবং নির্বাচনমূলক যাবতীয় পরীক্ষাতেই ইংরেজীকে প্রাধিকার দেওয়া হয়। সম্ভবত এই কারণেই অভিভাবকেরা তাদের ছেলেমেয়েদের ইংরেজী মাধ্যমে বিদ্যালয়ে প্রেরণ করে বা প্রথম হতে ইরেজী পড়ানো হয় এরূপ বিদ্যালয়ে পড়াতে চেষ্টা করে।

(৪) রাস্তাঘাটের পথ নির্দেশিকা, ট্রামে, বাসের সাইনবোর্ডে, সরকারী স্কুল, কলেজ ও অফিসের সাইনবোর্ডে এখনও ইংরেজী ব্যবহৃত হয়। কেন্দ্রীয় অফিস ও সংস্থার সাইনবোর্ডে তিনটি ভাষা ব্যবহৃত হতে দেখা যায়। কিন্তু রাজ্য সরকারের দপ্তরে এই নীতি অনুসরণ করা হয়নি। এখানে ইংরেজী পাশে বাংলা ব্যবহার করা উচিত ছিল। কিন্তু গত একুশ বছরে রাজ্য সরকার তা করে উঠতে পারে নি। যে ব্যক্তি প্রাথমিকে শুধু বাংলা শিখে এসেছে, তার পক্ষে কলকাতায় ট্রাম, বাস বা অফিস নির্ণয় করা খুবই কঠিন হয়ে পড়ে।

(৫) পঞ্চম শ্রেণীতে ইংরেজীর সাথে প্রথম পরিচয় ঘটাবার জন্য A Step to Learning English শীর্ষক যে পুস্তিকাটি সরকার কর্তৃক অনুমোদিত, হয়েছে, তা পড়লে এই ধারণাই জন্মায় যে, যে সকল ছাত্র-ছাত্রী আগের থেকে ইংরেজী পড়ে এসেছে, কেবলমাত্র তাদের পক্ষেই এই বইয়ের পাঠগুলি অনুধাবন করা সম্ভব। অন্যথায় কী করে মাত্র পাঁচটি পাঠের মাধ্যমে ইংরেজী বর্ণের পরিচয় ঘটানো সম্ভব হতে পারে? সবচেয়ে মজার ব্যাপার হল, Exercise-I-এ শিক্ষককে উপদেশ দেওয়া হচ্ছে যাতে তিনি প্রথম হতেই ক্লাসে ইংরেজী ব্যবহার করেন, যথা—Please stand up, Take your seat ইত্যাদি, যে ছাত্র কোনদিন ইংরেজী পড়েনি, তার পক্ষে কি করে সকল নির্দেশ বোঝা সম্ভব হতে পারে?

এ থেকে পরিত্রাণের অন্যতম উপায় হল, মিত্র কমিশনের সুপারিশ অনুসারে প্রাথমিক শিক্ষাকে পুনর্গঠিত করা। শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান ও শিক্ষকদের রাজনৈতিক উদ্দেশ্যে ব্যবহার না করা। সর্বোপরি, প্রশাসনের সর্বস্তরে বাংলা ভাষাকে ব্যবহার করা এবং প্রতিযোগিতামূলক পরীক্ষায় বাংলাভাষাকে অগ্রাধিকার প্রদান করা।

Teaching English as a Second Language in West Bengal's Schools

Probal Dasgupta

On matters such as public schooling, it is inappropriate to stress the details of this or that party's specific—either in the domain of regular politics or in that of academic debate and partisan positions. A population, working for its interests through a government representing it, must ensure that its broadest needs, viewed intelligently but without bias, are satisfied as satisfactorily as resources allow.

The current debate about the appropriate starting age for TESL provides an occasion for us all to rethink schooling in West Bengal. This state spends much of its energy producing highly trained personnel for the whole country. The production of what may be broadly termed mental workers is a major factor in West Bengal's political economy. Hence the importance of the educational system's liability to sustain such production, even in the eyes of those members of the system who can play only a supportive or vicarious role. We need to bear these factors in mind without losing sight of special needs or handicaps in, say, the rural sector.

It seems to me that we can all converge on the view that the broadest educational needs of West Bengal's population include at least

(A) the construction of a solid knowledge base

(B) the ability to acquire and apply knowledge across various contexts

(C) a nationally viable set of adjustments enabling mobility and flexibility.

There is a consensus that (A) calls for at least the use of Bangla as the general medium of schooling. This has been accomplished. But (A) also requires a serious cultivation of knowledge at higher levels in Bangla. This is a remote dream that our society has not even set its sights on. Indians producing any new knowledge present their research for public exposure and criticism in English, which the nation treats as the language of record. Bengalis are no exception. We use Bangla to distribute the knowledge produced, not for the critical social conduct of research. Thus (A) does call for the emergence of a self-consciously bilingual population, for the nation's present parameters are not poised for change. Whether the products of our schools need proficiency in English is an easy question to settle. They need it. The issue is how best they can get it.

What is the "solid" knowledge base that this formulation of (A) assumes? A solid base needs to be subjectively rooted, in the learner's psyche. This calls for serious knowledge of the mother tongue. And there also has to be objective groundedness, in a social process of continuous knowledge production and scrutiny. The critical process

in India works in English and with English. So our schooling must provide proficiency in English as a basis for cognition.

I turn to (B). We often have to obtain and use knowledge in contexts where Bangla is dominant. So children must learn Bangla rigorously. And we often need to acquire and apply our knowledge in domains where English controls the traffic. This means that schooling must empower children in that direction. They need to be able to learn new things and communicate effectively in both languages. The need, then, is for flexibility, and generalised language skills.

That we dissociate the teaching of Bangla from that of English is unhelpful if we desire rigour and flexibility in both. I will return to this point.

An important point frequently neglected is (C). West Bengal's educational system, now that we are discussing it again, has long faced some calibration difficulties on the national grid. Bengali teachers have a long ingrained and insufficiently debated habit of awarding low marks, treating a first class virtually like a Nobel Prize. This habit makes no sense at a time when West Bengal's teachers are no longer nationally perceived as particularly excellent. The dangerous, academically unjustifiable, and non-accountable habit of low marking, especially in the language disciplines, may well have been a factor leading to our student visibly decreasing proficiency in English relative to the rest of India. One consequence is a decreased national mobility for the products of West Bengal's schooling.

If—as the present debate indicates—our system of language teaching needs to be reexamined, then it is pointless simply to ask whether English as a second language should be taught from Class 5 onwards, or 3, or some other number. As if we can afford to keep quiet about, and thus to retain, all the undesirable habits that shape our language learning and teaching scene! From memorising, through low marking, to the dissociation of subjects from each other, a host of problems have made our system immobile and inflexible. These malaises will guarantee failure if we just resolve to have English taught from a very early age but change nothing else.

Of course I would not plead for a knee-jerk reaction at the level of telling teachers to award default high marks and use the low marking device only in cases of utmost necessity. Firstly, such a reaction would accept the terms of the problems as the low markers formulate it, and compel them to walk into their worst nightmare on the mercenary grounds that only such surrender to what they view as loose standards will give our students national mobility. Secondly, such a reaction would dissociate the problem of low marks from the topic of language learning. I find them connected. And I find the high standards/low standards dichotomy, as West Bengal's low marking teachers visualise it a serious misunderstanding of the academic process.

West Bengal's teachers regard language as a given, as a patrimony, to be imparted by rote learning if necessary and by more sophisticated devices if possible, but to be examined on the basis of inquiring how much the learner has received of the foreign

givens. In reality, language is a negotiation, and its learning an active taking. Examiners need to find ways to tap this. And teachers need to increase and not decrease the degree to which the child makes free with the rules of the apparent givens. Bengalis approach English as an outside language ; its acquisition poses for them a question of reexpression, or recoding. Any cross-system mobility, any inter-system recoding involves us in activities that are free from any eternal-looking or ubiquitous constraints characteristic of a single system. Such activities need to be seen as crucially a matter of play between the structures, as a space of such play. Which English do we learn? Our English, the English we take. Appropriate teaching methods must forgo the pleasures of the judgmental sadist, and must steep the teacher in the unaccustomed new pleasures of judgement-suspending practices of welcoming the way children play with linguistic and mathematical-formal objects.

Professor Ramakant Agnihotri (Linguistics, University of Delhi) has proposed, with some credibility, that English departments in Indian universities be recast as generalized language teaching institutions which heighten the self-awareness of all Indian users of English as bilingual persons. I would go one step further, arguing that English in our contexts is a bridging tool which helps reconceptualize. We should treat it as half-way between our Bangla, in West Bengal's case, and our mathematics.

If our pedagogues or even a large number of them agree to this, I am sure that our education planners and our educators will come up with contextually appropriate implementations of this idea far superior to anything I could imagine. However, just to make the idea concrete, I will nevertheless make a few hypothetical suggestions, on the (in many places, patently false) assumption that the infrastructure and manpower may make some of these proposals realistic in particular schools. I stress that my point is not to propose innovations for their own sake, but to give examples to unpack the annalysis offered above.

(1) There should be some explicit merger of either teaching English and teaching Bangla, or teaching English and teaching Mathematics, whichever a given school may regard as more realistic given its manpower constraints. This merger should be treated the way the present systems treats the merger of language teaching and literature teaching.

(2) As soon as a child can actively use the Bangla script and the English script, even before the conjunct consonant letters of Bangla have been fully mastered, the child should be made to practise transcription of Bangla words in some adequate Roman script (preferably one equipped with digraphs and usable in telegraphy or normal typing, to ensure future usefulness) and the transcription of English words in some adequate Bangla script (with, if necessary, new symbols—such as the right-hand side component of the ou-kaar (ৗ) to represent the neutral vowel sound of the "a" in "above"—so that the important distinctions of English can be shown). This should be treated as a form of play, with children inventing their own variants of whatever symbol system the school prefers. But the children should be gently guided towards

accountability in such play. This can take the form of making them read each other's efforts—mutual intelligibility failures quickly demonstrate the need for norms—or making them transcribe back and forth between the two scripts.

(3) Children need to be encouraged to take their Bangla for granted, as the spontaneous basis of cognitive work and play ; and to use English and formal mathematical symbolism in creating careful scaffolding for conceptual tools. As soon as enough English words with obvious structure have been picked up, children should be encouraged to analyze, say, driv-er, teach-er, un-seen, un-heard, test-able, like-able, without immediately feeling compelled to perform a similar exercise for Bangla which would drive them into the—in contemporary West bengal, especially for the non-elite communities, opaque and discouraging—complexities of Sanskrit word formation which deprive most of the complex words in Bangla of the type of analyzability that would repay a child's curious tinkering and fiddling. Older children should be nudged towards -ation, -ize, -ify, -ity, and the elements that go into the make-up of scientific terms, especially in a subject like chemistry.

(4) Language and conceptualization skills need to be integrated with the whole curriculum in this way. But I am proposing a specific merger of English only with mathematics in some schools and with Bangla in others. (A three-discipline merger is inadvisable.) At the level of making children aware of phrase and sentence building strategies, it might make sense to spend most of the effort on English where subject-verb agreement can be a problem, but schools that can encourage students to turn the search-light on Bangla as well should do so as well. The point is not to teach any official and terminology-laden analysis of either words or constructions, but to guide the child's playful assembly of increasingly complex objects, understood as coding tools.

(5) This formal and active approach needs to be extended to the literature component as well. I would invite teachers to see this component as a marriage of receptive theory with productive practice. In receptive theory, children come to realize that writing takes place in several genres, that genres have their specific uses, and that "the essay" is not one but many, as subjects impose different forms of expository organization. In productive·practice, students can be brought to see that composition skills need to co-evolve with subject knowledge ; that "free" narrations that seeks to win the audience's attention and applause naturally hooks up with conceptually structured reporting and summarizing activities, sliding into taking notes, extracting points, expanding, criticizing, building arguments, and other study skills. If one cannot show children how to write what they need to, it is pointless to feed them the products of the great masters.

In general, our educational ethos will have to switch over, sooner or later, to an activist type of teaching. Teachers in such an ethos know how to welcome what the student can do with particular building blocks, but also to point out to them how the use of tools reshapes and recordes that the student already perceives, and that conceptualization involves recoding. The general idea of languages and formalisms as recoding instruments needs to become part of the way West Bengal's learners feel able to actively manipulate the symbolic world around them. Only then can we stop

passively accepting our status as creatures of somebody else's majestic imagination—whether a colonizer, or a privileged set of litterateures, or the originators of some particular system of thought.

If we give ourselves the time to ensure that the particular English we teach and learn becomes an English that frees us instead of enslaving us, then I am sure we can all agree, without further debate, to start this work as early as possible in the school's curricular sequence. But this should not be read as a simple endorsement of the idea that "English teaching" regarded as some a priori given, unproblematic, ready-made process that produces English-knowing children, should commence at Class 1, or 3, or 5, or whatever. The problem is to embed English teaching in the rest of our learning and teaching, not simply to expand it to some specifiable size.

Professor Pabitra Sarkar One-Man Committee to consider the introduction of English below Class V in West Bengal.

Supriya Chaudhuri

Response to Question No. 1.13 on printed Questionnaire, i.e. reasons for responses to 1, 1.1, 1.11 and 1.12.

I have stated my opinion that (1) English should be introduced from Class I, that (1.11) the content of English teaching in this class should be *the alphabet, capitals and small letters, three and four-letter words, and simple sentences using three and four letter words,* that the teaching method should involve the use of the *blackboard, a handwriting workbook (non-cursive), a simple reading primer using three and four-letter words, and oral practice in the class in reading simple words from the blackboard or primer,* and finally that there should be *no examination or evaluation at the end of the year, and no system of passing or failing.*

My reasons are briefly as follows. I believe that children are quicker to absorb basic instruction at a young age, provided that the learning process is gradual and thorough. If they begin English at the age of five or six, they can spread the process of basic acquisition of vocabulary and reading competence over several years. In the present system, they are expected to go from learning the alphabet to reading paragraphs in a few months, certainly within a single year.

The child who begins English in Class I should be expected to do no more than read three and four letter words and go through a handwriting workbook, by the end of the year. Her learning should thus keep pace with her general acquisition of reading skills, primarily in her mother tongue. Naturally she will learn to read and write *earlier* in her mother tongue, but there should be a link between *learning to read* in either language.

The mother tongue *should be used in the English class* to explain difficulties, as well as to explain the meanings of the words that are being taught. Every effort should be directed towards making the child feel at home in the English class, so that she takes pleasure in being able to recognize the meanings and applications of words in her daily life.

I have recommended that there should be no annual examination in English, not even class tests, up to Class V. The child should not be subjected to pressure or anxiety. However, grades may be awarded from Class II onwards so that the parents are informed of the childs progress.

I have set out in my responses to the questionnaire a graded course in English, emphasizing the thorough acquisition of basic skills, up to Class IV. It is my further opinion that English should be taught as a compulsory subject only up to Class X, and made an optional subject at the plus-two level (Classes XI and XII).

Continuation of answers to Questionnaire of Prof. Pabitra Sarkar One–man Committee

Dr. Surabhi Banerjee

CLASS I

Contents—English Alphabets and Preferably two three letter small and easy words signifying objects and items with which the learners can easily identify.

Recommended reading—Step by Step–(Bengali Edition), John Field, Oxford University Press, BBC English, London.

Method—Should be basically, verbally communicative mainly through interesting pictures and drawings, to be taught preferably by teachers with ELT (English Language Training) Diploma holders. The prime focus should be on the **functional** use of the language which is to be gradually developed later at a maturer stage. In order to do away with the curious sense of fear and distance vis–a-vis learning English in the rural areas of the state, the teacher may, from time to time, to meet the demands of the rural context, fall back on the resources of the native tongue of the learner. For the purpose of facilitating comprehension the mode of teaching may as well be fruitfully bilingual.

As I have suggested earlier, the Bengali edition of English *Step by Step* (John Field, OUP) may serve as a model for similar books which, I must stress, should cater to the demands of the rural as well as urban cultural contexts.

If we are serious about implementing this new policy of introducing English from Class I itself, ***I am not in favour of holding an examination*** at this stage, primarily because I am more keen on doing away with the compulsion syndrome at this impressionable stage. I believe it is the task of the teacher to make the learner more aware of the pleasures of learning the language than of pain unduly induced by an examination-system which is definitely not rewarding at this preliminary level.

CLASS II

Contents—At this stage, the focus should be on ***Simple intelligible sentences,*** framing together a string of small words.

Stress should be given on both ***spoken and written sentences.***

Method—Pictures and word-related games such as scrabbles, word-jumbles may successfully blend pleasure with learning.

The teacher ought to stimulate an active interest in the language, the mastery would come gradually.

Recommended reading—Step by step (Bengali edition), OUP, and also books along the lines of *Learning English* to be devised for younger learners.

CLASS III

Since we propose to implement a uniform language policy for both rural and urban areas, in my opinion the system of examination may be recommended only from Class IV all through the state. As the urban areas are electically exposed to the invasion of the foreign tongue while the rural areas are dominated by the indigenous, it would be wiser to introduce examination a year latter, after the learner acquires, in my view, an appraisable base in the language.

CLASS IV

Contents—Since the learner has already acquired a fairly commendable base in the language by this time, at this stage, stress should now be given on short compositions, dialogues, story-writing (from given outlines) and above everything else, on translation.

I propose this time–old mode of teaching language should be ***proportionately fused*** with the functional–communicative mode. If the functional communicative mode is followed to an extreme extent, as it is being done at the moment, the entire purpose of teaching English is bound to fall flat. In spite of the recent spate of high scores in English on paper, the statistical data on students who are *truly competent in this language* are appalling.

Therefore, the teacher must make the student inculcate a sense of literature (through the teaching of language, of course), however rudimentary it might be, at this level.

Method—Pictures and word-related games such as scrabbles, word-jumbles may successfully blend pleasure with learning.

The teacher ought to stimulate an active interest in the language, the mastery would come gradually.

Recommended reading—Step by step (Bengali edition), OUP, and also books along the lines of *Learning English* to be devised for younger learners.

Date : 4th July, 1998

Professor Pabitra Sarkar One-Man Committee

to consider the introduction of English as Second Language below Class–V & Restructuring of Curriculum & Syllabus of English in Primary Schools

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QUESTIONNAIRE on "The introduction of English below Class–V & restructuring of curriculum & syllabus of English in Primary Schools"

1. From which class of the Primary stage, in your opinion, should English be taught as Second Language ?

....

1.1. Class–I...............................Yes/No [please underline the intended answer]

1.11. If the answer is 'Yes', what should, in your opinion, be the contents and method of teaching English in this class ?

Contents—

Method—

1.12. Will there be Examination/Evaluation at the end of the year and will the unsuccessful students be declared 'Failed' in that examination ?

Examination/Evaluation .... Yes/No

Failed .... Yes/No

1.13. Please write down your reasons for your answers above, mentioning the item Nos. as 1.1, 1.11, 1.12, Attach separate sheets, if necessary.

[*P. T. O.*]

1.2. From Class–II .... Yes/No.

1.21. If English is taught in both classes I & II, what should, in your opinion, be the contents and method of teaching English in Class II ?

Contents—

Method—

1.22. Will there be Examination/Evaluation at the end of the year and will the unsuccessful students be declared 'Failed' in that examination ?

Examination/Evaluation .... Yes/No

Failed .... Yes/No

1.13. Please state your reasons for your answers above, mentioning the item Nos. as 1.2, 1.21, 1.22. Use separate sheets, if necessary.

[*P. T. O.*]

1.3. From Class–III .... Yes/No.

1.31. If English is taught for 3 years in Classes I, II & III, what should, in your opinion, be the contents and method of teaching English in Class III ?

Contents—

Method—

1.32. Will there be Examination/Evaluation at the end of the year and will the unsuccessful students be declared 'Failed' in that examination ?

Examination/Evaluation .... Yes/No

Failed .... Yes/No

1.33. Please state your reasons for your answers above, mentioning the item Nos. as 1.3., 1.31., 1.32 and use separate sheets, if necessary.

[*P. T. O.*]

1.4. From Class–IV .... Yes/No.

1.41. If English is taught for 4 years in Classes I, II & III & IV, what should, in your opinion, be the contents and method of teaching English in Class IV ?

Contents—

Method—

1.42. Will there be Examination/Evaluation at the end of the year and will the unsuccessful students be declared 'Failed' in that examination ?

Examination/Evaluation .... Yes/No

Failed .... Yes/No

1.43. Please state your reasons for your answers above, mentioning the item Nos. as 1.4, 1.41, 1.42 and use separate sheets, if necessary.

2. Whatever amount of English may be taught at the Primary Level, please write down the level of Competencies/Skills you expect in it from the students at the end of Class IV?

(a) In the field of reading ....

(b) In the field of speaking ....

(c) In the field of writing ....

....

Signature and Seal of the Person/ Association etc. responding

Date..

N. B. : Please use separate sheet, if necessary, for each class separately.

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অধ্যাপক পবিত্র সরকার—এক সদস্য কমিটি

প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয়সমূহে পঞ্চম শ্রেণীর আগে দ্বিতীয় ভাষা হিসাবে ইংরেজির প্রবর্তন এবং ওই স্তরে প্রচলিত পাঠক্রম ও পাঠ্যসূচির পুনর্বিন্যাস সংক্রান্ত প্রশ্নমালা

১৪৭এ, রাসবিহারী অ্যাভিনিউ, কলকাতা–৭০০ ০২৯
ফোন : ৪৬৬-০২০৯/১০০৫ ❑ ফ্যাক্স : ৪৬৬-০২০৯

১. আপনার / আপনাদের মতে প্রাথমিক স্তরে কোন্ শ্রেণী থেকে দ্বিতীয় ভাষা হিসাবে ইংরেজি পড়ানো উচিত?

১.১. প্রথম শ্রেণী—হ্যাঁ / না [উদ্দিষ্ট উত্তরের নীচে দাগ দিন]

১.১১. উত্তর 'হ্যাঁ' হলে ওই শ্রেণীতে কী পড়ানো / শেখানো উচিত হবে বলে আপনার মনে হয়?

বিষয় :

পদ্ধতি :

১.১২. বছরের শেষে পরীক্ষা নেওয়া / মূল্যায়ন করা এবং সে পরীক্ষায় অসফল ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ফেল করানো হবে কি?

পরীক্ষা / মূল্যায়ন .... হ্যাঁ / না

ফেল .... হ্যাঁ / না

১.১৩. উপরের উত্তরগুলির জন্য আপনার / আপনাদের যুক্তি যথাক্রমে ১.১, ১.১১, ১.১২—র সংখ্যা নির্দেশ করে, —প্রয়োজন হলে আলাদা কাগজ জুড়ে, —লিখুন।

(পরবর্তী পৃষ্ঠায় দেখুন)

১.২. দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণী থেকে : হ্যাঁ / না

১.২১. প্রথম ও দ্বিতীয় দুই শ্রেণীতেই ইংরেজি পড়ানো হলে দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণীতে কী পড়ানো / শেখানো উচিত বলে আপনার / আপনাদের মনে হয়?

বিষয় :

পদ্ধতি :

১.২২. বছরের শেষে পরীক্ষা নেওয়া / মূল্যায়ন করা এবং সে পরীক্ষায় অসফল ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ফেল করানো হবে কি?

পরীক্ষা / মূল্যায়ন .... হ্যাঁ / না

ফেল .... হ্যাঁ / না

১.২৩. উপরের উত্তরগুলির জন্য আপনার / আপনাদের যুক্তি যথাক্রমে ১.২, ১.২১, ১.২২—র সংখ্যা নির্দেশ করে, —প্রয়োজন হলে আলাদা কাগজ জুড়ে, —লিখুন।

(পরবর্তী পৃষ্ঠায় দেখুন)

১.৩. তৃতীয় শ্রেণী থেকে : হ্যাঁ / না

১.৩১. প্রথম ও দ্বিতীয় এবং তৃতীয় তিন বছরই ইংরেজি পড়ানো হলে তৃতীয় শ্রেণীতে কী পড়ানো / শেখানো উচিত বলে আপনার / আপনাদের মনে হয়?

বিষয় :

পদ্ধতি :

১.৩২. বছরের শেষে পরীক্ষা নেওয়া / মূল্যায়ন করা এবং সে পরীক্ষায় অসফল ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ফেল করানো হবে কি?

পরীক্ষা / মূল্যায়ন .... হ্যাঁ / না

ফেল .... হ্যাঁ / না

১.৩৩. উপরের উত্তরগুলির জন্য আপনার / আপনাদের যুক্তি যথাক্রমে ১.৩, ১.৩১, ১.৩২—র সংখ্যা নির্দেশ করে, —প্রয়োজন হলে আলাদা কাগজ জুড়ে, —লিখুন।

(পরবর্তী পৃষ্ঠায় দেখুন)

১.৪. চতুর্থ শ্রেণী থেকে : হ্যাঁ / না

১.৩১. প্রথম, দ্বিতীয়, তৃতীয় এবং চতুর্থ চারটি শ্রেণীতেই ইংরেজি পড়ানো হলে চতুর্থ শ্রেণীতে কী পড়ানো / শেখানো উচিত হবে বলে আপনার / আপনাদের মনে হয়?

বিষয় :

পদ্ধতি :

১.৪২. বছরের শেষে পরীক্ষা নেওয়া / মূল্যায়ন করা এবং সে পরীক্ষায় অসফল ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ফেল করানো হবে কি?

পরীক্ষা / মূল্যায়ন .... হ্যাঁ / না

ফেল .... হ্যাঁ / না

১.৪৩. উপরের উত্তরগুলির জন্য আপনার / আপনাদের যুক্তি যথাক্রমে ১.৪, ১.৪১, ১.৪২—র সংখ্যা নির্দেশ করে, —প্রয়োজন হলে আলাদা কাগজ জুড়ে, —লিখুন।

২. প্রাথমিক স্তরে যতটুকুই ইংরেজি পড়ানো হোক, তা থেকে চতুর্থ শ্রেণীর শেষে ছাত্রছাত্রীর কাছ থেকে আপনি কী ধরনের সামর্থ্য ও দক্ষতা আশা করেন তা লিখুন :

(১) পড়ার ক্ষেত্রে ....

(২) বলার ক্ষেত্রে ....

(৩) লেখার ক্ষেত্রে ....

....
উত্তরদাতার স্বাক্ষর ও শিলমোহর

তারিখ..

বিঃ দ্রঃ প্রয়োজনবোধে প্রতিটি শ্রেণীর জন্য আলাদা আলাদা করে অতিরিক্ত কাগজ ব্যবহার করুন।

প্রকাশক : সম্পাদক, অধ্যাপক পবিত্র সরকার এক সদস্য কমিটি, ১৪৭এ রাসবিহারী অ্যাভিনিউ, কলকাতা–৭০০ ০২৯।

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